OLD!

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CLASSIC GAMES

retro GAMER

AMSTRAD | COMMODORE | SEGA | NINTENDO | ATARI | SINCLAIR | NEO GEO | SONY | COIN-OP | MOBILE

MONSTER MASH

HOW MASAHIRO UENO CREATED SUPER CASTLEVANIA IV



ALSO INSIDE

RAINBOW WALKER | STURMWIND
DEACTIVATORS | ZEPPELIN GAMES
SPECTRUM 128K | PRINCE OF PERSIA

@!#?@!

THE COLOURFUL STORY OF ONE OF GAMING'S QUIRKIEST CELEBRITIES

SANDY WHITE

30 YEARS OF INDUSTRY ANECDOTES FROM THE ISOMETRIC MASTER



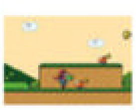
ATARI JAGUAR

WHY IT'S TIME TO CHANGE YOUR OPINION

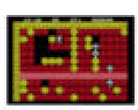
20 YEARS OF CANNON FODDER

JON HARE ON CREATING MINIATURE MAYHEM

FEATURED INSIDE THIS ISSUE:



25 SNES HITS
IS SUPER MARIO WORLD YOUR FAVOURITE GAME?



BRAIN STRAIN
KEY DEVELOPERS LOOK BACK AND UNRAVEL THE HISTORY OF PUZZLE GAMES



COUNTER-STRIKE
THE STORY OF A COMMUNITY MOD THAT BECAME A SMASH-HIT

IMAGINE PUBLISHING
DigitalEdition
GreatDigitalMags.com
ISSUE 119

The world's first endless action RPG



FDG ENTERTAINMENT

Pixel Licker LLC

THE RETROBATES BEST PUZZLE GAME



DARRAN JONES
I'm going for *Tetris DS*. It marries the classic design of the original with new modes and Nintendo characters. It's brilliant fun.
Expertise:
Juggling a beautiful wife, two gorgeous girls and an award-winning magazine
Currently playing:
Shadowrun Returns
Favourite game of all time:
Strider



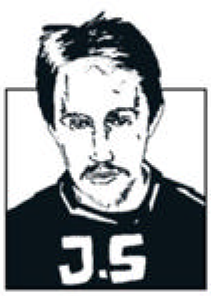
PAUL DRURY
I love the brain-mangling beauty of *Echochrome* and *Echoshift*. They gently bend your thinking into some very strange shapes.
Expertise:
Motion-capturing puppets
Currently playing:
Game & Wario
Favourite game of all time:
Sheep In Space



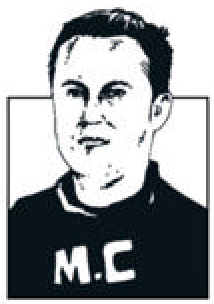
PAUL DAVIES
Panel De Pon! It was re-released as *Pokemon Puzzle* or something, but I'll always love the original for getting everyone hooked despite featuring lots of pastel colours and little fairies!
Expertise:
Banging my head against a brick wall
Currently playing:
Halo 4
Favourite game of all time:
Ghouls 'N Ghosts



JASON KELK
Sensitive on the C64; it's frustratingly addictive and has stolen far too many hours from me!
Expertise:
Being a homebrew hero
Currently playing:
Uridium 2 (Amiga)
Favourite game of all time:
IO



JOHN SZCZEPANIAK
There are hundreds of puzzle games and we're only allowed one? OK, *Catrap* on the Game Boy, aka *Pitman*. The designer and his wife invited me to their home!
Expertise:
Japanese games
Currently playing:
Writing a book
Favourite game of all time:
Star Control 2



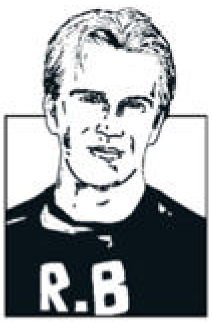
MARTYN CARROLL
Has to be *Puzzle Bobble*. I'm pretty sure I have a version for every console I own.
Expertise:
Games that blipped and buzzed
Currently playing:
The Starship Damrey
Favourite game of all time:
Jet Set Willy



DAVID CROOKES
I was a particular fan of *Puzznic*. It lent a nice spin to the matching tile sub-genre.
Expertise:
All things Amstrad CPC, *Dizzy*, Atari Lynx
Currently playing:
Grand Theft Auto III
Favourite game of all time:
Broken Sword

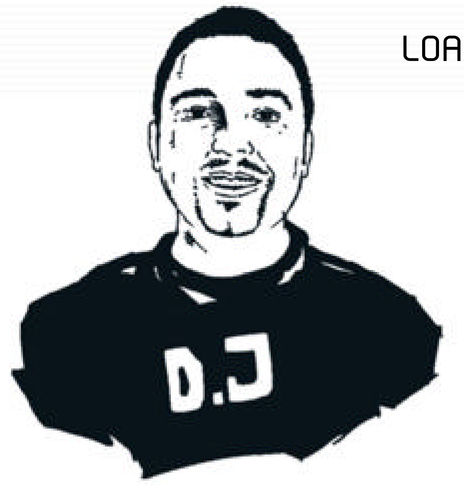


IAIN LEE
Tetris. It's an obvious answer but it's just so perfect.
Expertise:
Pretending to be an American on Xbox Live
Currently Playing:
Halo 4
Favourite game of all time:
Elite (the BBC B version)



RICHARD BURTON
I played the sliding puzzler *Split Personalities* endlessly on the Spectrum and Amstrad. It feels even more retro now with the Thatcher, Reagan, Sir Clive and Alan Sugar puzzles…
Expertise:
Spectrum and Amstrad gaming
Currently playing:
Slap Fight
Favourite game of all time:
Manic Miner

LOADING...



Something interesting happened this month. I was listening to people in the office talking about old games when Atari's Jaguar came up. Immediately I began hearing the usual stories about the console from those involved. The first thing I thought was: 'I'm really old'.

The second thing I realised was that some of them were between five and ten when the machine was launched, and not all of them had played on one. Fortunately, I happened to have a Jaguar under my desk (don't ask why, I just do), so when I heard one person complaining about how uncomfortable the controller was, I was able to show them that this wasn't actually the case.

It's interesting, because it makes you question how many people form opinions from what they've read as opposed to their own experiences, and highlights how important magazines like **Retro Gamer** are and why they need to do things properly. We're sometimes accused of creating revisionist history and painting certain consoles and companies in a more favourable light – something I don't believe we do.

What I do believe though, is that some consoles, like the Jaguar, have got a raw deal over the years and it's time to put that right. I'm not going to lie to you and say it's 'the best console you've never played', but I will say that you should reconsider your opinion on it going forward.

Enjoy the magazine,



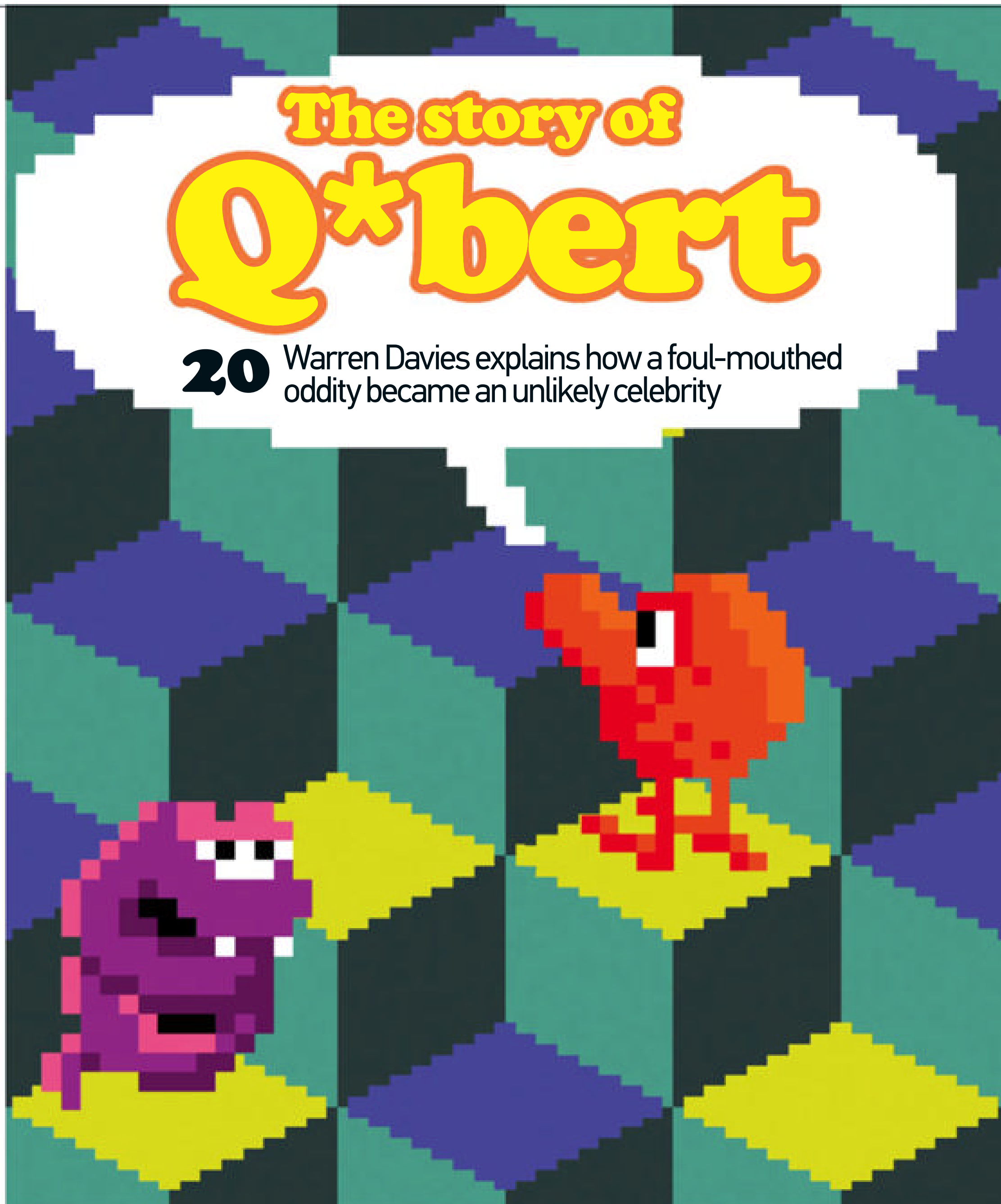


CONTENTS



>> Load 119 Breathing new life into classic games

FEATURED



RETRO REVIVALS

In the hot seat this month…





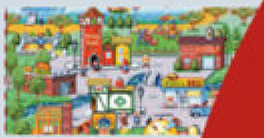




"A rare example of a perfect videogame sequel" Samuel Roberts



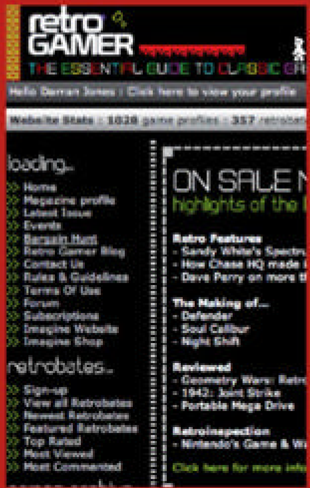




ESSENTIALS

RETRO RATED





retro radar

>> GIVE US TWO MINUTES AND WE'LL GIVE YOU THE RETRO WORLD



>> The big news this month is the recent acquisition of a large number of classic Amiga games for a staggering $500,000. We also speak to Brandon Cobb about the return of some classic Mega Drive RPGs and look at the incoming PC update of Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow

CONTENTS



» [Amiga] Cinemaware is another company that will have its titles redistributed under the Amiga Games Inc umbrella.



» [Amiga] *Eye Of The Beholder II* is another game that's perfect for touchscreens.

AMIGA CLASSICS TO HIT MOBILE DEVICES

AMIGA GAMES INC TALKS EXCLUSIVELY ABOUT BRINGING 16-BIT CLASSICS TO HANDHELDS



The gaming community was rocked recently by the revelation that distribution company Writer's Group Film had acquired Amiga Games Inc for $500,000. The huge deal has already set the Amiga community alight, with some wondering what games are included and how they could be acquired due to the numerous licenses involved. The rights remain with the original copyright owners, with Amiga Games Inc simply redistributing classic games. We were lucky enough to sit down with Eric Mitchell, CEO Writer's Group Film Corp and Pat Roberts, interim president and COO of Amiga Games Inc, to find out what the deal means for retro fans.

How did Writer's Group get involved with this acquisition?
Eric Mitchell: Through Pat, who I've known for a long time, we saw the opportunity to basically take Amiga games and put them back out there on handheld devices etc. The opportunity exists because obviously there's a past with Amiga and this was a way to provide funding for these games and get them out there on these devices and on these platforms. Without going into too much detail, Amiga licenced the games for specific use on handheld devices etc and we are going to take those games, port them to different devices and pay Amiga a royalty in doing so. Amiga Games Inc is set up solely for that purpose. It's not taking the games and using them for every different output, it's just solely for handheld devices, tablets etc.

> **"Our goal is to work with the publishers to put these games out"**
> Patrick Roberts

How will this affect the games being sold by Amiga Inc?
Patrick Roberts: All the operations that Amiga Inc had in the republishing of the Amiga games; preserving the legacy of Amiga content is going to rest with Amiga Games Inc. So, the Blackberry releases and the current ones that are out there and any other channels that Amiga Inc were using to bring content to new devices – all of that is going to be under the umbrella of Amiga Games Inc. As far as software goes they're still working on stuff using operating systems and we're specifically dealing with the classic games.

Will they be distributed through current Amiga emulators?
PR: No. A few people have done this with their own games, but there's not really a channel for distribution where you have the licensed titles. All the titles we're going to be putting out are licensed from the rights holders. They're not ROMs that we've grabbed from somewhere,





» [Amiga] We can see games like *Super Cars 2* being well suited to touch controls.

we actually license them from the publishers that own them.

So they're not just ADF files then?
PR: [Laughs] I don't like getting sued and I don't like to speak for Eric, but I'm pretty sure he feels the same way. Eric especially has worked in content distribution for about 22 years, so our goal is to work with the publishers to put these games out, license them correctly and make sure everything is legally in place for us to be able to do that and pay royalties too. The people who own the rights deserve to get paid for the release.

So the games are still owned by the original companies and you've bought rights to be able to license certain versions of those games.
PR: That's correct.

Some are concerned that this is a legal minefield. What can you say to put their minds at rest?
PR: My history and Eric's history in the entertainment industry has all been around dealing with content and creating content. I worked for Disney and I worked for Dreamworks. The reason I got paid by those companies is because they could sell their content and make money off their content. It's ingrained in our culture in Hollywood that you have to pay for your content.

Are the two industries similar?
EM: I think [they're] quite similar. I've spent a good 20 years working in the movie business and the most important thing when you move forward with a project, or finance a project, is making sure you've secured a chain of title to whatever the IP is that you're working on. There has to be not only a paper trail, but a correct paper trail where everyone that has a stake in the IP gets rewarded.

Will these be enhanced versions?
PR: We'll be doing certain enhancements that are outside the game content itself. Our license right now with the publishers allows us to put the game out as it is, as the original. I don't want to say that we won't do anything in the future, but we'll be doing things like graphics filtering to improve the graphics quality and audio filtering to improve the audio quality. We'll also be trying to integrate some of the technologies that have come up in the last 20 years, as a wrapper to provide the best gaming experience that we can. If we can integrate things like high score tables that are networked across users or across the platforms we're going to try and do that kind of stuff. We want a retro gaming experience, but modernise [the games] in a way that enhances the experience.

How do you select the games that you want?
PR: To start off, it was a case of 'these are the publishers who are most open to licensing their titles for retro gaming'. So that's why they're on the list. We are trying to license more libraries as well. Some publishers… no one's said no but certain publishers may not know where the rights lie with their libraries, or it's just not as important to them as they're concentrating on other platforms. I got lucky because two of my favourite titles are actually in that list, so I'm looking forward to playing those again on my tablet.

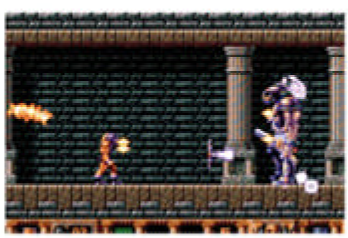
What's included?

» Here's a selection of the 200-strong titles Amiga Games Inc plan to distribute across mobile platforms

- **Eye Of The Beholder, Eye Of The Beholder II** (Westwood Associates) (EA)
- **Valhalla trilogy** (Vulcan)
- **It Came From The Desert** (Cinemaware)
- **Rocket Ranger** (Cinemaware)
- **Xenon, Xenon 2: Megablast** (Bitmap Brothers)
- **Gods** (Bitmap Brothers)
- **Battle Chess** (Electronic Arts)
- **Desert Strike** (Electronic Arts)
- **PGA Tour Golf** (Electronic Arts)
- **Turrican trilogy** (Factor 5)
- **Super Cars, Super Cars 2** (Gremlin Graphics)
- **Deflektor** (Gremlin Graphics)
- **Zool, Zool 2** (Gremlin Graphics)
- **Alien Breed: Tower Assault** (Team 17)
- **Assassin** (Team 17)



» [Amiga] Although many Gremlin games are part of the do, the *Lotus* trilogy sadly isn't included.



THE RETRO DEBATE

» From the forum: What do readers think of the buyout?

VISIT **RETROGAMER.NET/FORUM** TO HAVE YOUR SAY

"Why no Lemmings? Is it a license issue? That's a shame as it is one of my fave puzzle games of all time. The original and not the sequel"
DoraemonTheCat

"Personally, I can't imagine that Amiga Games would be a good fit for that format, even so, there have been Spectrum & C64 apps available for some time now" **Nemesis**

"If they build in Moga Pro support, release on Android, do decent conversions and don't charge too much… I might be interested! Otherwise I'll just stick to emulating"
Prof Mango B Coconut

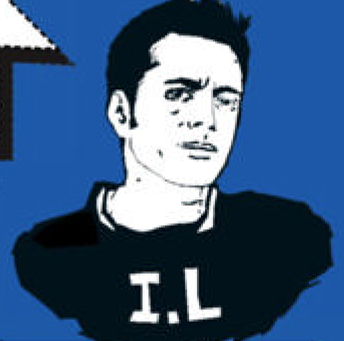
"Half a million is a lot of money to shell out for 20 year old games, many of which I'm sure lots of people will never have heard of.
It's a big gamble, but I hope it pays off. Will be great for a new generation of gamers to enjoy retro classics"
Paranoid Marvin

retro columns

>> RETRO RECOLLECTIONS WITH CELEB IAIN LEE

Here's the bio...
Iain Lee has been a fervent gamer since he was tiny. And that was a long time ago. In between playing computer games and collecting crap from eBay, he has presented Channel 4's *The 11 O'Clock Show* and *Rise*, and currently does bits of stand-up as well as presenting the *2 Hour Long Late Night Radio Show* on Absolute Radio at 11pm.

Hi there, my name's **Iain Lee**. You might remember me from Thumb Bandits, The 11 O'Clock Show and Absolute Radio, but now I'm here to confess my love for retro



Pole position no longer

If you are reading this then we share a common sense of what is right and good – old videogames. There is a chance that you are also a fan of obscure late-Nineties comedians but, let's be honest, it's unlikely.

I have a soft spot for all old videogames, the look, the feel of the controls, the sound. A lot of them actually stand the test of time – all down to the gameplay. They can look ropey, but are still as playable as they were 20 years ago. Some, though, are complete and utter guff and offer nothing but disappointment and a hollow sense of ennui as you replay them and realise your childhood was based on nothing but hollow dreams and ashes.

Pole Position was one of my favourite games as a kid. I loved the arcade version. At the time, I considered it the pinnacle of motor racing simulators. I had it on my BBC, and even though it was a pretty poor conversion, I still thought it was wonderful. My brain did that thing that kids seem to do quite well and filled in the gaps, bringing the home micro version up to the standard of the arcade cab.

I was so into it, I even managed to endure the *Pole Position* cartoon. I can remember nothing about this show at all, apart from the catchy theme tune that every now and then pops up as an earworm and drives me completely mad. I'm guessing it was some kids that drove fast cars and… maybe… solved crimes? Did they solve crimes? There was probably a talking dog or a robot as well*.

Anyway, a quick game on *Pole Position* recently broke my heart. It is shit. There are no redeeming features. It's slow and sluggish, the movement is jerky, the explosions are laughable, the sound is pony. Now, most of these things don't necessarily mean a game is going to be no good. But, what really sets it into the category of 'File Under Stinker' is the fact that it's just so dull. You'll get no enjoyment or sense of achievement from playing it.

How on earth did the young me derive any pleasure from this tepid excuse for a game? And how did it become a worldwide phenomenon? They must have put something in the water. The Eighties were a crazy time. The thing is, I know there are some of you reading this who have gone back to some of the games you thought were wonderful in your youth and simply cannot see what the attraction was. If that's you, do let me know what they are: iain@iainlee.com is my virtual address.

*I just Googled it. They *did* solve crimes and, while they didn't have robots, the cars – Roadie and Wheels – could talk. Actually, it looks pretty good. I'm off to YouTube to fall down the rabbit hole for an afternoon.



the wall

>> EVERYTHING THAT'S BEEN HAPPENING IN THE WORLD OF RETRO THIS MONTH



MEGA DRIVE GEMS GO PC

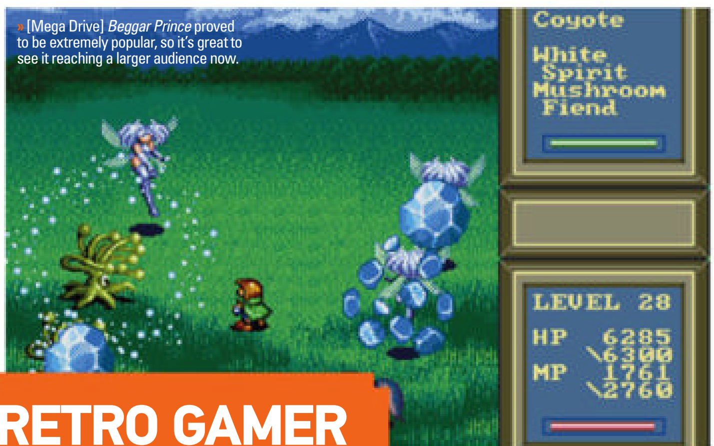
BRANDON COBB ON CONVERTING SUPER FIGHTER TEAM'S GAMES TO PC AND MAC

If you're fans of Sega's Mega Drive you may recall Super Fighter Team releasing three homebrew games for the popular system. *Beggar Prince* was released in 2006 for the 16-bit console, and was effectively an English translation of a Chinese RPG that had first been released in 1996. After the success of *Beggar Prince*, Super Fighter Team released *Legend Of Wukong* in 2008. Its most recent Mega Drive release was 2011's *Star Odyssey*. Originally known as *Blue Almanac*, it was a Japanese exclusive RPG that was given a Western localisation by Super Fighter Team.

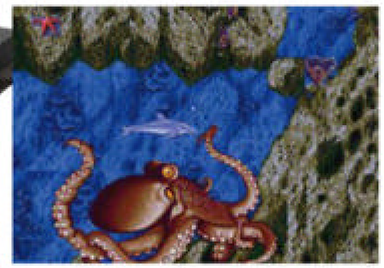
All three titles proved to be extremely popular at the time and boxed copies of them will often sell on auction sites for three figure sums, making them quite an expensive proposition. That's now changed however, because Super Fighter Team is making all three games available to PC and Mac owners, meaning that even more gamers will gain access to these quirky RPGs. There will be no physical versions of the *RPG Trifecta Pack*, meaning that the games will be digital downloads.

"So many people have written in to request digital download versions that I've lost count," begins Super Fighter Team's Brandon Cobb. "As I think everyone knows by now, I'm what you could call a 'purist', in that I feel it's best to play console games on the console itself, not via emulation. But forcing my preferences on everyone else has limited the exposure of these games, which is contradictory to my original goal of sharing them with the largest possible audience."

The *RPG Trifecta Pack* is the result and should be available for purchase now. There are no additional extras however, with Brandon telling us: "They are direct adaptations of our cartridge releases, which can be played using a keyboard or gamepad." We were keen to know if Brandon was concerned that the release would upset those who bought the more expensive originals, but he doesn't feel that will be a problem, telling us: "No. I think, if anything, it upsets those who haven't had the opportunity to purchase the physical copies – something we hope to remedy in the future by manufacturing more of them."



» [Mega Drive] *Beggar Prince* proved to be extremely popular, so it's great to see it reaching a larger audience now.



ECCO GOES 3D

Sega continue to delight and frustrate us, by announcing classic 3D treatments of past classics, then refusing to release them outside of Japan. So far, Sega has released *Altered Beast*, *Sonic The Hedgehog*, *Super Hang-On* and *Space Harrier* and has just announced *Galaxy Force II* and *Ecco The Dolphin*. The official site also teases two additional games, which we're hoping are *OutRun* and *After Burner*. Priced at 600 yen (£4), the games have been overhauled to take full advantage of the 3DS's 16:9 screen and 3D capabilities. Quite why Sega won't release them outside of Japan remains a mystery, as we're sure they'd sell like proverbial hot cakes.

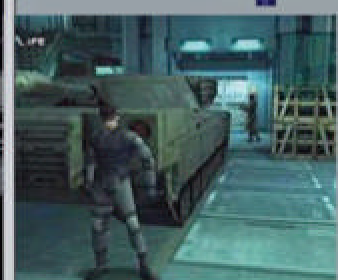


RETRO GAMER COASTERS OUT NOW



Imagine now has a range of fantastic retro coasters available to buy. Sold in packs of four, each coaster is extremely well made and features some of our best covers from the first 100 issues. *Pac-Man, Missile Command, Laser Squad, Sonic The Hedgehog* and *Metal Slug* are just a few of the covers shown, and they all look stunning thanks to a high quality gloss finish. The coasters themselves are extremely sturdy, utilising a strong cork backing that makes them hard to break, while protecting your desk surface. They go brilliantly with our **Retro Gamer** mugs and are the perfect Christmas gift. Each coaster pack costs £4.99 and is available now from **www.imagineshop.co.uk.**





METAL GEAR LEGACY CONFIRMED

European gamers are going to get to experience the *Metal Gear Solid: The Legacy Collection* later this year. It was initially revealed as a Japanese exclusive, but Konami has now confirmed that the *Metal Gear Solid* collection will be sneaking its way to Europe in September. Unlike *Metal Gear Solid HD Collection, The Legacy Collection* will be exclusive to PS3. It will include *Metal Gear Solid, Metal Gear Solid 2: HD Edition, Metal Gear Solid 3: HD Edition, Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker HD Edition, Metal Gear Solid: Special Missions* and *Metal Gear Solid 4: Trophy Edition*. It will also contain two *MGS* digital graphic novels and should be the perfect way to pass the time until *MGS V: The Phantom Pain* finally arrives.

DEAD OR ALIVE 5 GOES ULTIMATE

Tecmo Koei recently revealed a new version of its popular fighting franchise. *Dead Or Alive 5 Ultimate* features all the additional content from the Vita's Plus version of the game as well as additional bonuses. New characters – including *Ninja Gaiden*'s Momiji – will make their debut, and Team Ninja is promising the biggest roster in *DOA* history. Additional moves will be added and tag fighting will be enhanced, while there will be new locations including some from the *Ninja Gaiden* series. Team Ninja is also claiming that this version of the game will include the most realistic and sensual graphics of any game in the series. Take from that what you will…



» [Xbox 360] The new version of the version which was based on the original version. Confused? So are we.

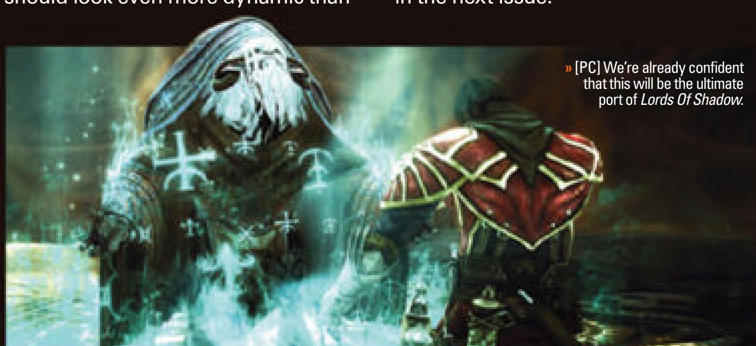
CASTLEVANIA POWER-UPS

HOW KONAMI IS ENHANCING LORDS OF SHADOW FOR PC

Konami is releasing an enhanced PC edition of its 2010 hit *Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow* at the end of the month. Released to tie in with the incoming *Lords Of Shadow 2*, the new PC version will improve on the original in a great number of ways, hopefully making it the definitive version of the successful reboot.

The most important will be that the game will now run at a super smooth 60 frames per second, which should make *Castlevania*'s combat even more satisfying to play. It will also run in 1080p — the original was 720p — which means that the impressive visuals of the original should look even more dynamic than before. Another bonus is that the *Ultimate Edition* will include both *Reverie* and *Resurrection*, the two pieces of downloadable content that were released for the original PS3 and Xbox 360 versions.

Other improvements include a new storyline, additional weapons and power-ups, as well as brand new Titan battles. The original skirmishes with Titans, while enjoyable, felt too sparse. Hopefully, the ability to fight more behemoths should make them feel like a more integral part of the core game. The whole package is rounded off with trophy integration, cloud saving and the ability to explore brand new locations. Expect a review in the next issue.

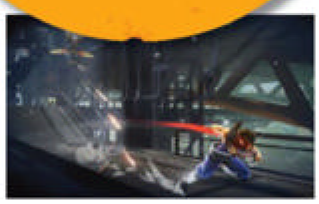


» [PC] We're already confident that this will be the ultimate port of *Lords Of Shadow*.

MOST EXCITED ABOUT…

BACK IN TIME LIVE 2013

Love 8-bit tunes? Then visit Manchester on 15 September for a Ben Daglish hosted charity music event. You can order tickets from **www.facebook.com/BackInTimeLive**



STRIDER RETURNS

Just as we were going to press, Capcom revealed something so brilliant – so astounding – that Darran still doesn't believe it's true. The unbelievable news? Only that a new *Strider* game will be released next year. Capcom unveiled the remake/reboot (we're not quite sure what it is yet) at this year's Comic Con to ecstatic cheers. While some are concerned about Helix Games' past track record, it does seem to have nailed the essence of Capcom's ninja in the early footage that's been released. More news next month, providing we can shake Darran out of his state of shock.

retrocolumns

PAUL DAVIES GIVES HIS VIEWS ON THE RETRO WORLD

Here's my bio…
In 1992 I started out on *Mean Machines Sega* and *Nintendo Magazine System*. In 1995 I became editor of *C&VG*. I led the *C&VG* website from 1998 until Christmas 2000, then I left journalism to be concept design manager at Criterion Games. I returned to journalism in 2002 and from 2005 I've been running my own company, Unlikely Hero.

Hello, retro gamers. My name is **Paul Davies**. I used to be the editor of C&VG and have also worked on a number of classic gaming magazines over the years



Finger on the button

You and I are never going to love gesture control, because it goes against what makes us human. Not so much a 'pub conversation' this, but definitely one for a fizzy pop in the park. No matter how hard I try to admire the motion-sensing marvels of Kinect and PlayStation Eye, something just doesn't add up. But I have a very good idea what this might be…

Sure, I grinned the first time I played with EyeToy in 2003, those boffins at Sony – whatever would they dream up next? More recently I have to admit that EyePet and Wonderbook are very clever. Kinect Adventures and Dance Central for Kinect are kind of cool for a couple of nights trying to make my missus love Xbox. Somehow though, they're not exactly catching fire are they? Marketing teams can't even convince OAPs to look vaguely interested for *Daily Mail* editorials any more.

If I might dare to point something out, with only a hunch to back this up, the reason hands-free gaming is struggling to catch on is because it removes one of the basic pleasures of gaming – becoming good with our hands. Those of us blessed with our full complement of digits have enjoyed making the most of them since humans evolved (or were zapped into existence, if you're God-fearing). Opposable thumbs are the secret to our success as a species; our ability to grip something and use our fingers to manipulate with extraordinary skill. Musicians and mechanics alike perform miracles using the human-exclusive thumb and fingers setup. Gamers too, you may have noticed.

Muscle memory and manual dexterity make gaming absolutely compelling for millions of people. Practice makes perfect, or at least performance-ready, and we can respect those of us that have attained a higher degree of competence when it counts. Because buttons matter (something Sony was at pains to point out with PlayStation Vita in February 2012), we can differentiate a good gaming controller from a bad one by its ergonomic design, heft and tactile feedback according to taste over time. The throw of an analogue stick, the distance between two of them, dead-zones and the speed at which a button returns to its default state… anyway, all of this matters and is ingrained.

So how did the Nintendo Wii get everyone so fired up? At the time it struck me like a magic trick and was so much fun that it didn't matter so much that accuracy didn't play a crucial part. Somewhere at the back of my brain, however, was the nagging thought that the experience was unproductive.

A friend of mine was often fond of saying "it is what it is" when confronted with something immovable. For gaming, the need to connect directly with the experience means hands on the controller and eyes on the screen. It's a pastime that is never going to appeal to everyone but, rather like learning a musical instrument or practicing a craftsman's skills, it can benefit other humans too – such as, you know, friends and family. Always good to have a proficient gamer on your team!

From the first ping of the missile in *Space Invaders* to the run-slide-ready awesomeness of Dolphin Diving in *Black Ops*, tactile feedback from games is going nowhere for as long as I can see. Thank God.

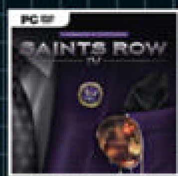
retrodiary

16 August – 12 September

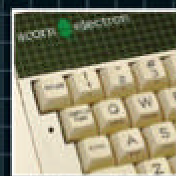
>> A month of retro events both past and present



August 23 1991
■ The SNES is launched in America with *Super Mario World* and *F-Zero.*

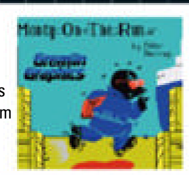


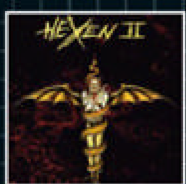
23 August 2013
■ *Saints Row IV* is due for its European release on the Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3. The game has already been banned in Australia for being inappropriate.



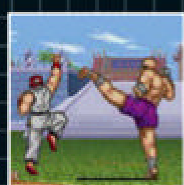
25 August 1983
■ Acorn Computers reveals a new product – the Electron – at the Acorn User Show.

26 August 1985
■ Gremlin Graphics releases its classic platform game *Monty On The Run.*





31 August 1997
■ id Software's fantasy first-person shooter *Hexen II* debuts on PC.



30 August 1987
■ Capcom releases *Street Fighter,* complete with ridiculously huge buttons to mash.



27 August 1992
■ The very first *Super Mario Kart* game is released for Super Nintendo.



27 August 1979
■ Atari releases its first vector graphics coin-op arcade game, the 'land a spaceship on the moon' game *Lunar Lander.*



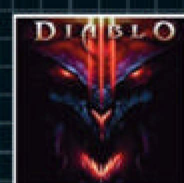
1 September 1982
■ Namco and Atari's racing game *Pole Position* makes its debut in the arcades of Japan.



1 September 1997
■ Rare releases its demolition game *Blast Corps* on the Nintendo 64 in the UK and Europe.



1 September 2006
■ Much hack and slash mayhem ensues with the release of *N3: Ninety-Nine Nights* on the Xbox 360.

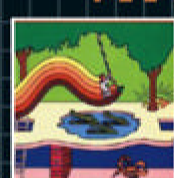


3 September 2013
■ Blizzard Entertainment's *Diablo III,* the action role-playing game, is due for release on the Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3.

9 September 1998
■ The Sega Dreamcast makes its debut with an American release.



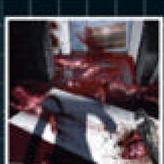
6 September 1993
■ The Amiga CD32 is released in the UK and underwhelms everyone that touches it. It is discontinued just seven months later.



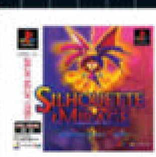
6 September 1982
■ Released by Activision and developed by David Crane, *Pitfall!* arrives on the Atari 2600 console.



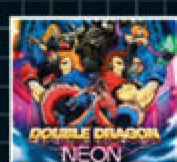
3 September 1998
■ Kojima and Solid Snake sneak onto PlayStation with *Metal Gear Solid.*



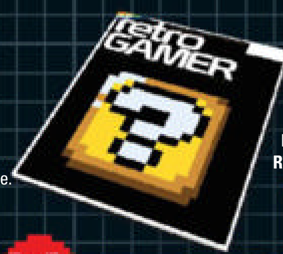
9 September 2011
■ Zombie horror *Dead Island* gets a European release on Xbox 360, PS3 and PC.



10 September 1997
Silhouette Mirage, a side-scrolling action game by Treasure, is released exclusively in Japan on the Sega Saturn.



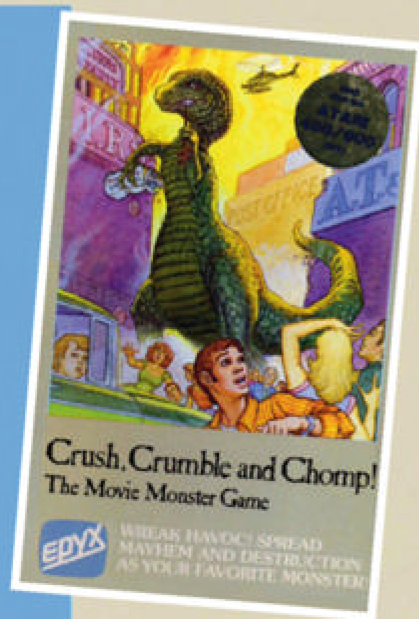
11 September 2012
■ *Double Dragon Neon* is released on PlayStation Network. It is influenced by the Eighties and is awesome.



12 September 2013
■ New issue of **Retro Gamer** hits the streets.

BACK TO THE EIGHTIES

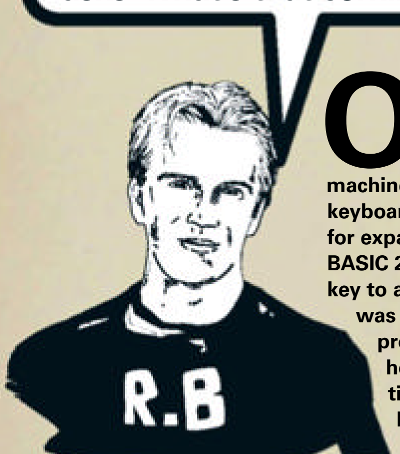




» [Atari 400/800] An early game from Automated Simulations, who later became Epyx, the monster movie mayhem mash-'em-up, *Crush, Crumble and Chomp!*

THE LATEST NEWS FROM MAY 1981

MAY 1981 – VIC-20 debuts, Red Baron crashes, Space Odyssey an oddity, Temple Of Apshai starts the Dunjonquest and Crush, Crumble and Chomp! begins the Epyx monster mash. Richard Burton asks 'what's that coming over the hill?'



Officially released this month in North America was Commodore's VIC-20 home computer. The keenly priced machine boasted a professional keyboard, colour, sound, room for expansion and a user-friendly BASIC 2.0 operating system. The key to any new computer release was its software base, and a very promising roster of software houses releasing and developing titles for the VIC-20 seemed to have secured a rosy future for Commodore's newest baby.

People had already glimpsed the machine at the 1980 Consumer Electronics Show, but its development could be traced back another two years. It got its name from the Video Interface Chip, which Commodore had developed for use in the videogames console market. Unfortunately, its timing coincided with the first inklings that a videogames crash was impending, and so decided to develop its own reasonably priced colour home computer.

The public took to it immediately and it sold rapidly, becoming the first home computer to pass the 1 million units sold landmark in January 1983. By the time the VIC-20 was discontinued in January 1985 it had shifted over 2.5 million units.

Japan had already had its version of the VIC-20 since June 1980, when the renamed VIC-1001 had been launched at under $300 – a long-term prerequisite of Commodore's Jack Tramiel. The American VIC-20 also hit its price point.



» [Arcade] Don't be fooled by the screenshot, *Space Odyssey* was a tedious stinker of a game.

We didn't have to wait too long for the UK debut of the VIC-20, as it would take centre stage at the three day Commodore PET Show commencing on 18 June.

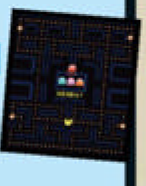
Atari released its latest coin-op game, *Red Baron*, complete with its impressively large cabinet. The first-person flight simulator saw you take on the role of a World War I fighter pilot flying in a bi-plane for the Allied Forces. The levels were all pretty samey, with your task being to shoot down enemy planes, blimps, tanks and buildings during alternating ground and airborne phases – all while avoiding crashing into the vector graphic drawn mountains and dodging enemy fire.

The graphical style was similar to Atari's *Battlezone*, as both games ran on virtually the same hardware. *Red Baron* arcade cabinets were often refurbished *Battlezone* cabinets with the *Red Baron* livery stuck on top of the *Battlezone* artwork. Unfortunately, the coin-op just didn't engage with gamers and it flopped rather badly as a result.

Taito unveiled its arcade shooter game *Colony 7*, which played like a cross between Atari's *Missile Command* and Taito's *Space Invaders*. The premise of *Colony 7* was that you must defend said colony from an alien attack with two large ion laser cannons. You also had an ion shield for temporary protection of your people and the ominous sounding Eradicator Rocket, which was essentially a smart bomb that wiped out everything

CHARTS

MAY 1981



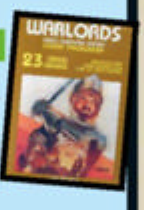
ARCADE
1. Pac-Man (Namco)
2. Phoenix (Centuri)
3. Missile Command (Atari)
4. Asteroids Deluxe (Atari)
5. Battlezone (Atari)

ACORN ATOM



1. Fruit Machine (Bug-Byte)
2. Atom Invaders (Bug-Byte)
3. Demon Dungeon (Micro Power)
4. Invader Force (Micro Power)
5. Pinball (Bug-Byte)

ATARI 2600



1. Warlords (Atari)
2. Pele's Soccer (Atari)
3. Dragster (Activision)
4. Fishing Derby (Activision)
5. Missile Command (Atari)

MUSIC



1. Stand and Deliver (Adam And The Ants)
2. You Drive Me Crazy (Shakin' Stevens)
3. Stars On 45 (Starsound)
4. Chequered Love (Kim Wilde)
5. Chi Mai (Ennio Morricone)



» [Arcade] Despite decent gameplay, *Red Baron* didn't attract new gamers or even old *Battlezone* fans.



» The VIC-20 is launched. Just a year and a half later over 1 million users had succumbed to its charms.

on the screen. An unusual feature for *Colony 7* was that these extra weapons and shields could be bought by inserting additional coins rather than the usual power-ups earned with points/credits in-game.

Sega released *Space Odyssey* this month with development help from Gremlin Industries. This vertical and horizontal shoot-'em-up looked interesting enough, with colourful graphics and seven varied levels including a meteor dodging section. However, when the action began and the gameplay flowed it was difficult to hide your disappointment. Black holes featured prominently, and if you ran over one of the many scattered throughout the vertical levels you would become stuck and open to attack. By that point you didn't really care any more anyway…

It looked and played like a *Scramble* clone, but the woefully animated graphics of the alien ships and abysmal collision detection made the game hard work, tedious and thankless.

Newly released for the Atari 400/800 and Apple II was *Crush, Crumble And Chomp!* a movie monster game from Automated Simulations under its Epyx label. It would later ditch its company name to take on the much snappier name of its Epyx brand.

Crush, Crumble And Chomp! would see you take command of a movie monster attacking one of four major cities. The game itself was played on a scrolling map with simplistic 2D graphics and was turn-based, with the main objective being to destroy as much of the city as possible. There were other objectives and, when combined with the variety of monsters to play and the create your own monster option, *Crush, Crumble And Chomp!* had considerable gameplay longevity.

In 1986, Epyx released a sequel for the Apple II and Commodore 64, *The Movie Monster Game*, which also did well and featured new objectives such as rescue, escape and destroying landmarks. It was also played in a much more arcade style.

Also available from Automated Simulations/Epyx this month was the RPG *Temple Of Apshai* for Atari 400/800 and Apple II. The game had originally been released in 1979 on the TRS-80 and had sold very well, so a newly updated version was released. Once again, it was a resounding success and was converted to Commodore 64 and VIC-20 and then, later, the Amiga and Atari ST.

You play the part of an adventurer who must battle through a dungeon scenario against various monsters while collecting treasure and attempting to escape. *Temple Of Apshai* became the first game in Epyx's Dunjonquest series, which would include expansion games for both *Temple Of Apshai* and the later RPG *Hellfire Warrior.*

While all of Epyx's RPG releases were very heavy on strategy and statistics, it was undeniably influential in the early years of the genre. It came as no surprise that more RPG titles followed, the biggest of which was Origin System's first release in its *Ultima* series, *The First Age Of Darkness*, which was due out next month…

MAY WORLD NEWS

5 May saw the death of Bobby Sands at the HM Prison Maze in Northern Ireland at the age of 27 while on hunger strike. There were five demands which prompted the hunger strike, including the right not to do prison work or wear prison uniform.



Sands was a volunteer with the Irish Republican Army and also an elected Member of Parliament for Fermanagh and South Tyrone, representing the Anti H-Block/Armagh Political Prisoner party. However, he died a month after being narrowly elected and never got the chance to take his seat in the House of Commons.

13 May saw Turkish national Mehmet Ali Agca attempt to assassinate Pope John Paul II in St Peter's Square in the Vatican. The Pope was shot four times suffering severe blood loss. Agca was immediately detained, arrested and, in July, sentenced to life imprisonment. He was later pardoned by the Italian president at the personal request of Pope John Paul II.

May was a good month for music releases. Among some of the choicest aural delights were *Magnetic Fields* (Jean-Michel Jarre), *Computer World* (Kraftwerk), *Anthem* (Toyah) and *Tinsel Town Rebellion* (Frank Zappa).

29 May saw the world premiere of *Dead And Buried*. The inhabitants of a coastal town begin killing tourists and the local undertaker disposes of the bodies – until they start coming back to life! It featured Jack Albertson (Grandpa Joe in *Willy Wonka And The Chocolate Factory*) and Robert Englund (*A Nightmare On Elm Street's* Freddie Krueger).

THIS MONTH IN…

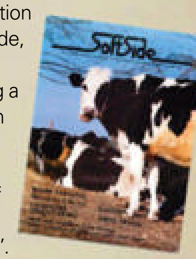
ANALOG

A preview of Atari's *Missile Command* conversion to the Atari 8-bit family of computers was featured favourably. Despite there being just one missile base – rather than the three of the arcade coin-op – the conversion was adequate, with good gameplay despite its disappointing graphics output.



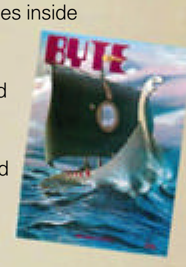
SOFTSIDE

Probably the most quirky left-field computer magazine cover ever was this oddball from *Softside*. A type-in listing for a TRS-80 dairy farming simulation did feature inside, but did that warrant putting a herd of Friesian cows on the cover? As the magazine itself put it, an "udder delight".



BYTE

Another odd cover, in as much as there was no wording other than the magazine name and the Software Piracy article title. The series of articles inside delved into the age-old software piracy problem and debated different aspects including back-up copies and software libraries, all with no apparent solution.





» [Arcade] Take a splash of *Missile Command*, a pinch of *Space Invaders*, mix well and you have *Colony 7*. Add gameplay to taste…

BACK TO THE NINETIES

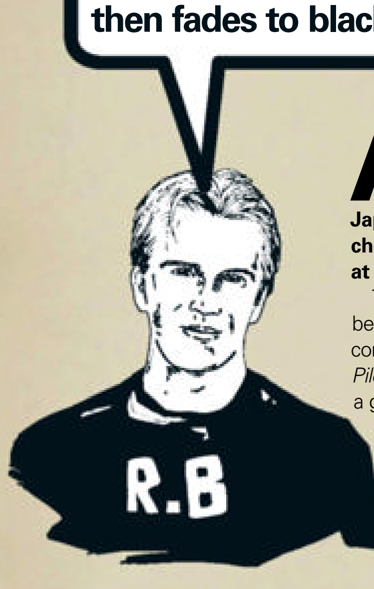


» [Nintendo 64] Could Nintendo pick a better game to launch with its N64 to showcase its capabilities? Didn't think so…



THE LATEST NEWS FROM JUNE 1996

JUNE 1996 – the N64 finally arrives, gamers feel the Force of Shadows Of The Empire, Lara Croft goes tomb raiding, Soviet Strike goes red raiding and Conrad B Hart goes fading. Richard Burton has flashbacks and then fades to black…



After months of false starts and delayed launches Nintendo finally released its Nintendo 64 console – albeit only in Japan – on 23 June, with a launch price cheaper than both of its two main rivals at a competitive $199.99.

The Japanese launch titles couldn't have been much better for showcasing the console's abilities – *Super Mario 64* and *Pilotwings 3D*. *Super Mario 64* did such a good job of promoting the Nintendo 64 and lifting sales of the console that the game eventually racked up sales of over 11 million units. The forgotten gamers of Europe would have to wait until March 1997 for their Nintendo 64 official release.

LucasArts gave us another reason to shell out for a Nintendo 64, with a development update regarding its hotly anticipated new *Star Wars* game, *Shadows Of The Empire*.

The first/third-person shooter would see you play the part of smuggler Dash Rendar. He must rescue Princess Leia from the evil Prince Xizor, head of the Black Sun criminal syndicate, who also fancies wiping out Darth Vader and replacing him at the Emperor's side as a Sith Lord.

The large 3D levels were detailed and varied, ranging from the snowy wastelands of Hoth battling AT-ATs in a snowspeeder to riding Swoop bikes around Mos Eisley. It wasn't all vehicle based shooting though, with several levels seeing Rendar ditch his Outrider ship and embark on foot for some up close and personal blasting.



» [Sega Saturn] *Guardian Heroes* had it all; great graphics, sound, gameplay and an engaging narrative.

The variety of levels, the attention to detail and the quite superb orchestral soundtrack – written specifically for the game – made for a decent *Star Wars* offering.

There was exciting news from Electronic Arts for fans of its *Strike* series as it detailed the future release of *Soviet Strike*, the fourth game in the franchise. The hugely successful trio of *Desert*, *Jungle* and *Urban Strike* would be a difficult act to follow.

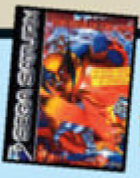
Your task as the Apache gunship pilot was to defeat the armies of the Shadowman, an elusive ex-KGB figure intent on plundering nuclear warheads from the USSR for sinister purposes.

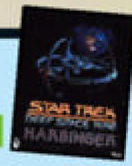
Soviet Strike was played out across five huge levels, each split into smaller missions. The biggest noticeable difference was that Electronic Arts had dropped the isometric perspective of the older games in favour of an enhanced overhead view.

With its lovely graphics, picturesque backgrounds, engaging gameplay and some wonderfully executed full motion video segments, *Soviet Strike* did well in the sales department when it was released on PlayStation in November. So much so, that Electronic Arts released a sequel in what was to be the last in

CHARTS

JUNE 1996






SEGA SATURN
1. X-Men: Children Of The Atom (Acclaim)
2. Virtua Cop (Sega)
3. Sega Rally (Sega)
4. WipEout (Psygnosis)
5. Golden Axe: The Duel (Sega)

PLAYSTATION
1. The Need For Speed (Electronic Arts)
2. Alien Trilogy (Acclaim)
3. Magic Carpet (Electronic Arts)
4. Actua Soccer (Gremlin Graphics)
5. Namco Museum Vol 1 (Sony)

PC
1. Star Trek: Deep Space Nine: Harbinger (Ocean)
2. Dogz (Mindscape)
3. Worms: Reinforcements (US Gold)
4. Civilization II (Microprose)
5. Worms (Ocean)

MUSIC
1. Killing Me Softly (Fugees)
2. Three Lions (Baddiel & Skinner/ Lightning Seeds)
3. Mysterious Girl (Peter Andre)
4. Because You Loved Me (Celine Dion)
5. Don't Stop Movin' (Livin' Joy)

JUNE WORLD NEWS

8 to 30 June saw England host the tenth European Football Championship, with anticipation high for the home team buoyed by the Baddiel & Skinner's *Three Lions* ringing around the terraces.

Despite high hopes and good group results it took a penalty shoot-out to defeat Spain in the quarter-finals.

Germany awaited England in the semi-final. Alan Shearer scored within three minutes, Stefan Kuntz equalised shortly afterwards and it remained that way until full-time.

Extra-time saw drama, with posts being struck and toes inches away from finding a Golden Goal winner. Sadly for England, the game ended in a penalty shoot-out. Two words – Gareth Southgate. Gah.

Germany went on to defeat the Czech Republic 2-1 in the final with an extra-time Golden Goal scored by Oliver Bierhoff.

Sci-fi shows took a hit when two programmes were cancelled during June.

Space: Above And Beyond ended after just one 24 episode series on 2 June. Set in 2063, it followed the United States Marine Corps Space Aviator Cavalry or 'Wildcards', with episodes linked by the ongoing Chig War.

Also meeting its maker this month was *seaQuest DSV*, cancelled after three series spanning 59 episodes. It starred Roy Scheider as Captain Bridger in a series that felt like an underwater version of *Star Trek*, based on a high-tech submarine.

» [Nintendo 64] *Star Wars* comes to the N64 and it's good fun too, despite the first level being the best level in the game…



the Strike series, the ominous sounding *Nuclear Strike*.

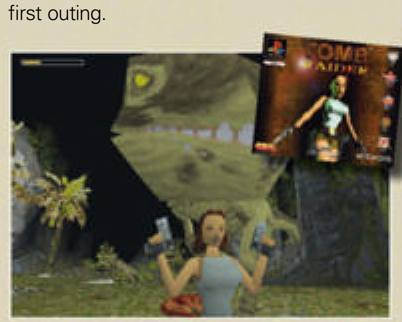
Core Design gave a news update on its latest project, a third-person action adventure which introduced us to Lara Croft, a pistol-toting, pony-tail wearing archaeologist with a sassy line in tight tops and equally figure hugging shorts.

In the game, Lara must find the location of three artefacts while despatching dangerous creatures and solving puzzles along the way. The perspective of *Tomb Raider* was realised extremely well, with Lara central on the screen with the camera following behind her. This was all throughout detailed 3D levels in which she would need to climb, shoot, jump and swim her way to her objective.

Tomb Raider would be available in October for the Sega Saturn and a month later for PlayStation and PC, eventually becoming a massive hit for its publishers Eidos Interactive with sales touching 7 million units. It also made a celebrity out of Lara Croft, with much written about this strong female rolemodel breaking new ground in videogaming and, conversely, about how the character was essentially pixelated eye candy for hormone ridden teenage boys. Either way, Lara Croft and *Tomb Raider* made Eidos a fortune and grew into a hugely successful franchise.

Conrad B Hart was back. After a stunning debut in the action/adventure platform game *Flashback* by Delphine Software, the long awaited sequel was released this month on PlayStation. *Fade To Black* wasn't simply more of the same, the textured 3D polygonal graphics were well implemented with a similar graphical viewpoint to *Tomb Raider* – an over the shoulder camera position which would change depending on your location.

As a game, *Fade To Black* was decent. It had the right pace for an action adventure game with enough puzzles, albeit fairly straightforward ones, to keep both gaming camps happy. The atmospheric tension was cranked up and really added to the game, helped by a narrative arc that you could easily immerse yourself in. However, it didn't quite match the majesty of Conrad's first outing.



» [PlayStation] If only archaeology was like this on *Time Team*. Could Tony Robinson fight a dinosaur?

Good reviews followed, as did good sales on the PlayStation. Delphine had also planned Nintendo 64 and Sega Saturn versions of the game, both of which sadly failed to materialise.

While Saturn gamers may have missed out on *Fade To Black*, they did get a superb game this month in the form of the excellent *Guardian Heroes*. It was part hack-and-slash game, part RPG and part side-scrolling beat-'em-up.

Developed by Treasure, there were several interesting features to the game – such as an incredibly diverse story mode which you controlled by means of multiple game paths. You choose your direction and what to do after each level, taking you down different routes with new bosses to defeat and, ultimately, a different ending.

Add to this to an excellent six-player versus mode, the hidden characters and crisply defined graphics and you had quite a game. Best of all, it was intuitive and fun to play. You would be hard pushed to get bored of *Guardian Heroes*; it was arguably one of the best Saturn games ever released.

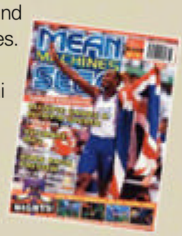


» [PlayStation] *Soviet Strike* continued from where *Desert*, *Jungle* and *Urban Strike* left off. Extremely playable.

THIS MONTH IN…

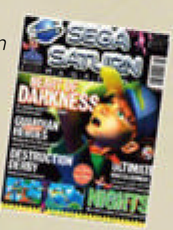
MEAN MACHINES SEGA

Sega was reportedly planning a series of Sega World indoor theme parks featuring rides based on its games and plenty of coin-op amachines. Sites for these parks included London, Shanghai and Sydney, with smaller Sega Parks introduced to the not so exotic locations of Tamworth and Wolverhampton…



OFFICIAL SEGA SATURN MAGAZINE

It was a superb month for Saturn gaming with an abundance of great titles released simultaneously. Delights such as *Guardian Heroes, In The Hunt, Ultimate Mortal Kombat 3, Panzer Dragoon Zwei* and *Destruction Derby* were out and vying for your interest… and hard earned folding stuff.



AMIGA FORMAT

Amiga Technologies was sold once again. After being purchased by Escom who really didn't seem to know what to do with it, VisCorp acquired all stock, property and staff from Escom in a $40 million deal. It seems VisCorp wanted the Amiga's technology for interactive TV set-top boxes.



retroGAMER.net READER'S REVIVAL



Richard Scarry's Busytown

WATCH A CLASSIC BOOK COME TO LIFE

#65

» NOVOTRADE » MEGA DRIVE » 1994

For someone whose earliest education was based on the teachings of Richard Scarry's seminal 1968 book *What Do People Do All Day?* playing this game is the equivalent of an 80-year old listening to a load of Andrews Sisters music on a bright and shiny CD. Or something to do with *Star Wars*…

The point is that this game is pure joy in cartridge form. From the big splashy title screen with Lowly Worm's big smiling head to the little mice playing in the park, every moment takes me back to that special place. A place where there was still such a thing as 'bed time' and popularity was judged on how fast you could run.

Starting with a great big map of Busytown, you move your happy little cursor around and find something to do. I headed straight for the harbour – as the double page ocean liner cutaway was always my favourite part of the book – and I suffered no disappointment whatsoever. First, I had to put all the pieces of the ship in the right place, then drop all the crew members into the right rooms and paint the thing! Joy!

Oh, there's no text either. Everyone talks. Yep, a Mega Drive game with *full speech*. Lots of fun there! If you fill someone's drink up too much and it overflows, your customer actually asks if you're blind – in the friendliest manner possible of course.

Go to the delivery company, and you get tasked with making deliveries around Busytown. The more deliveries you make, the busier Busytown becomes – like a miniaturized *Sim City*. All those new things opening up have their own little games to play too.

It's fantastic for kids, what with all the fun activities and the lack of hard words to read – but it's also fantastic for grown-ups, what with all the fun activities and lack of hard words to read. This is definitely where *Sonic* has been going wrong in recent years…

The Delivery Truck



RETROBATE PROFILE

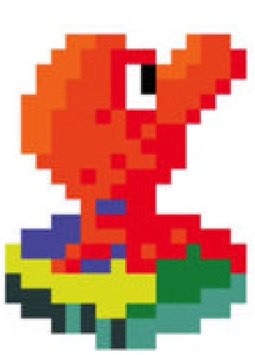
» **NAME:** RYAN DAVIES
» **JOINED:** 3 DECEMBER 2008
» **LOCATION:** LIVERPOOL, UK
» **OCCUPATION:** GADDABOUT
» **FAVE GAME SYSTEM:** MEGA DRIVE

The story of Q*bert

At the grand old age of 30, with a cameo in a hit movie and a new generation of appreciative fans, things are definitely looking up for Q*bert. Mike Bevan talks to designer Warren Davis, artist Jeff Lee and others involved about the history behind one of the unlikeliest of arcade heroes

We are asking, in the nicest possible way, what the @!#?&! *Q*bert*'s creators were thinking. And what kind of person dreams up an impossibly cute, expletive-spouting videogame hero? "One with a slightly demented sense of humour," laughs Warren Davis. "Among my influences growing up were *Mad Magazine*, The Marx Brothers and Don Rickles. I enjoyed being irreverent."

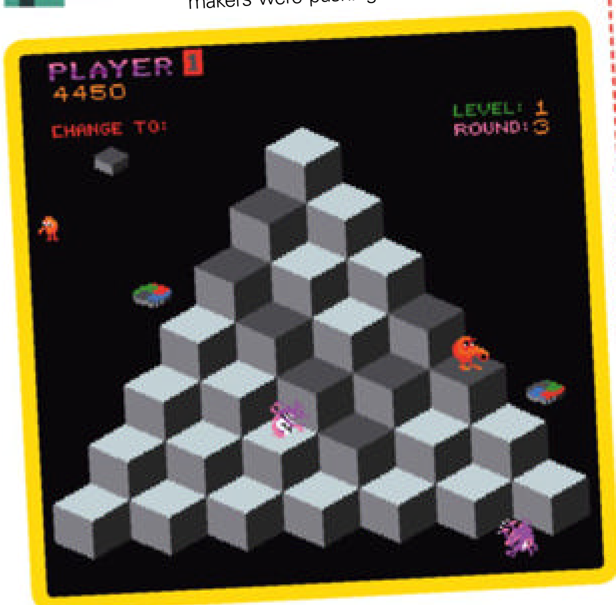
"I suppose you could say we were children of the Sixties, an era when people like Lenny Bruce, Jim Morrison and film-makers were pushing the boundaries [of] what could be said and depicted in the public arena," observes Jeff Lee, the man who first doodled the little fella with the orange snout. "Of course in *Q*bert*, we only hinted at the coarse language so commonly used by adolescent boys through the word balloon and David Thiel's brilliant random chatter."

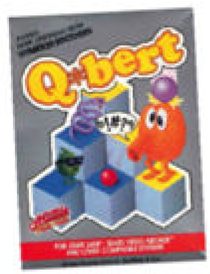


Despite his sweary demeanour and aversion to falling off pyramids, Q*bert's profile seems almost as high as it was three decades ago. He's made his way from Eighties arcade fame to appearing in the recent Disney animated film *Wreck-It Ralph*, and is up there with Pac-Man and Donkey Kong as a vintage gaming icon. And, there were other similarities between being chased around a maze by neon ghosts, avoiding a bad-tempered purple reptile and hopping across coloured blocks.

"*Pac-Man* was definitely an influence, as far as the structure of the game," admits Warren. "Changing the colours of the pyramid is like eating dots. The enemies in *Q*bert* are like the ghosts, especially Coily who chases after you. Jumping onto discs and returning to the top is like using the tunnel in *Pac-Man* to escape an enemy and get to the other side. And you could play the game with just a joystick and no buttons."

Being able to play one-handed was a definite plus point in terms of keeping hold of your pint. Jeff, however, confesses that he was never much of a *Pac-Man* fan. A bigger inspiration for him was MC Escher, the Dutch artist famed for his ingenious optical illusions. "What genius he possessed to make us look at the world through another prism," Jeff reflects. Another programmer, Kan Yabumoto, had noticed Jeff experimenting with a pseudo-3D cube pattern on an ▸





» There were numerous home versions of *Q*bert*.



SAM
THE TWIN BROTHER OF SLICK, THIS MONSTER UNDOES YOUR WORK

Q*bert Characters

The heroes and villains of Warren's arcade hit

WRONG WAY

A DANGEROUS GREMLIN WHO LIKES TO SNEAK UP ON Q*BERT

Q*BERT

HE'S ORANGE, PROUD, AND OBNOXIOUSLY LOUD

SLICK

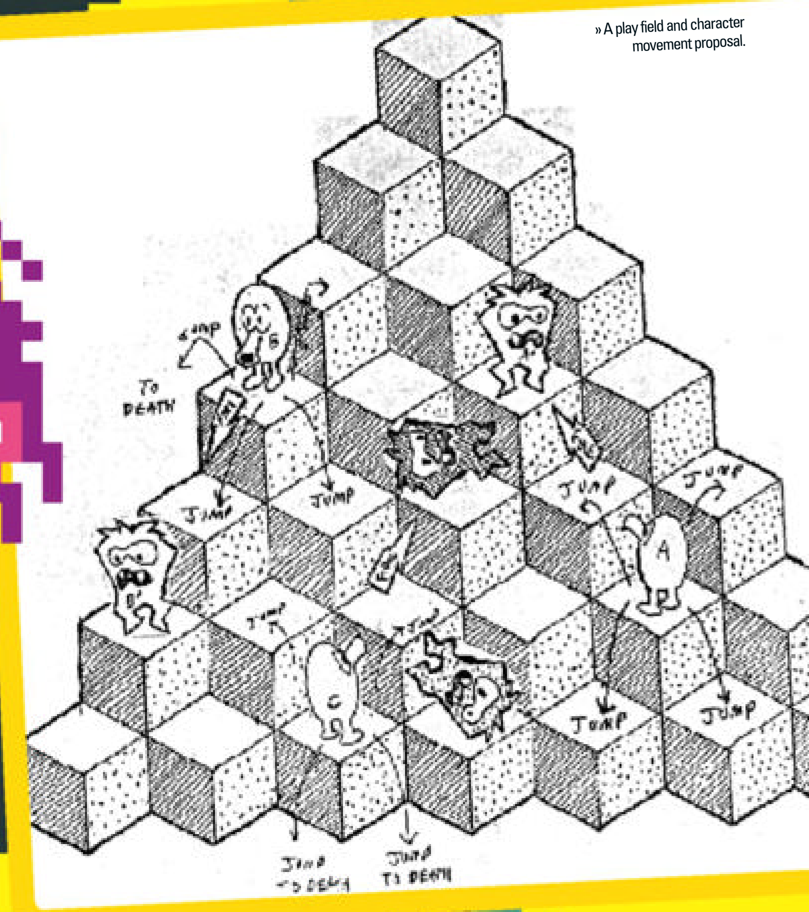
HE CHANGES Q*BERT'S CUBES BACK TO THEIR ORIGINAL COLOUR

COILY

ONCE HE HITS THE BOTTOM OF THE SCREEN HE'LL FOLLOW Q*BERT

UGG

THIS LITTLE PIG HAS SIMILAR TRAITS TO WRONG WAY



» A play field and character movement proposal.



Conversion @!#?&! Capers

We try out some of the home versions of the arcade original

ATARI 2600
■ Given the cavernous gulf between *Q*bert*'s arcade hardware and the humble 2600, this conversion is a thing of wonder. Despite being somewhat cut-down, it's an effective effort.

COMMODORE 64
■ C64 *Q*bert* looks the part, with our tubular-nosed hero, Coily the Snake and the rest of the cast lovingly animated in sprite-o-vision. Unfortunately, it's a bit on the sluggish side.

COLECOVISION
■ Probably the best Parker Brothers conversion as far as playability is concerned, Colecovision *Q*bert* is fast, responsive and feels much like the arcade game.

ATARI 400/800/5200
■ On the 8-bit Atari platforms *Q*bert* was very similar to the Colecovision port, albeit with slightly jerkier character animation and workmanlike graphics.

GAME BOY
■ This was the precursor to *Q*bert 3* on the SNES, and we prefer the feel of this version to the Game Boy Color remake. Both versions deal with the device's tiny screen by scrolling the playing field.

NES
■ The NES was more than capable of doing justice to the original arcade game. This port, released by Konami subsidiary Ultra Games, is the most authentic of the Eighties home conversions.

PLAYSTATION
■ We're not big fans of the polygon graphics in Hasbro's remake but, luckily, you can switch back to the traditional arcade game. Unfortunately, this conversion is blighted by poor controls.

▶ Apple computer and decided to adapt a mock-up on Gottlieb's coin-op hardware. This planted the idea for the bare bones of a game in Warren's mind.

"Seeing the full screen Escher pattern that Kan was working on triggered an image of a pyramid, simply because that would provide a falling object two choices of which way to bounce, which required me to learn to program randomness," Warren recalls. "I needed some bouncing balls, which required me to learn to program gravity. Once I'd done that, I set myself the goal of getting a player-character hopping around. Then, the obvious choice was for the player to have to avoid the balls. But beyond that there was no plan."

"Ron Waxman, VP of Engineering, had a habit of sitting behind programmers after hours and watching them work. He was doing that with me one night while I was hopping the little orange character around the screen with balls bouncing and he said, 'What if the tops of the cubes change colours when he lands on them?' That was the moment when the light bulb went off…"

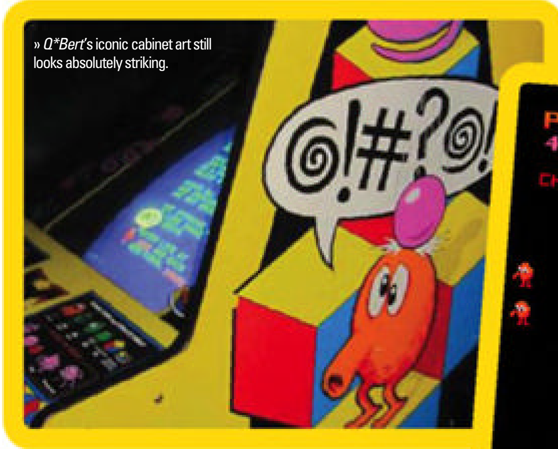
While Jeff and Ron had hit upon the key mechanics of the game, it was Jeff that originally came up with *Q*bert*'s surreal protagonist. "Once I had the balls bouncing down the pyramid randomly, I wanted to add a player-character," remembers Warren. "So I came to Jeff and asked if he had any lying around that I could use. He showed



» [Arcade] By the fourth level *Q*bert* really starts to seperate the men from the boys. It's an insanely tough game.



» [Arcade] Jump on a floating platform and you'll return to the start square.



» *Q*Bert's* iconic cabinet art still looks absolutely striking.



» [Arcade] You never saw this language on *Wreck-It Ralph*!

me a few and I picked the orange one with the long nose. Jeff's intention was that this character could shoot stuff out of his nose [inspiring the bizarre working title *Snots And Boogers*] but that didn't really work for a character hopping on a pyramid of cubes. For a time there was some pressure from my peers who thought shooting out of his nose would be cool. And I didn't disagree, I just couldn't figure out how to make it work given the physics of the pyramid and the way the game was evolving."

So Jeff's as yet unnamed character morphed swiftly from an anti-social snot-firing aggressor into a cube-hopping pacifist. Thankfully, the pair decided to grant the defenceless critter another way of thwarting the relentless pursuit of his nemesis, Coily the Snake. "At the time we had Q*bert moving about the pyramid, and if he jumped off it, he died. We also had Coily chasing after him, but the problem was… how does the player defeat this enemy? Jeff suggested the hovering disks, which would act as an elevator to bring Q*bert to safety while Coily would follow him to his doom… a very elegant and organic solution, I thought. The trick in programming it was to tune how close Coily had to be on your tail for this to work. If you jump when Coily is too far away, he's smart enough not to follow you off."

Adding to *Q*bert*'s enemy roll-call are the equally annoying Slick and Sam, two impish-eyed green blobs that undo all our hero's hard work by reverting the colours of any pyramid cubes they touch – unless players can intercept them while running a merry dance around Coily. "I was looking for obstacles to challenge the player and having a character who undoes what you're trying to accomplish seemed like an obvious thing," says Warren. Rounding up the game's line-up of baddies are the porcine Ugg and the gremlin-like Wrong Way, a couple of gravity-defying foes who climb the pyramid in what appears to be a completely different dimensional plane from Q*bert, just to mess with player's heads.

"My original game proposal was to allow the unnamed hero the ability to shift planes and be invulnerable to enemies in the 'wrong' planes," Jeff divulges. "That's why Ugg and Wrong Way exist in Escher-esque planar gravity. All of that was quite complicated, especially from the player control standpoint – likely disorienting to the player – and used up too many foreground sprites. Warren discarded most particulars of my original proposal and implemented his own ideas, which gave the game a simpler elegance."


» [Arcade] We've finally completed the first stage.


» [Arcade] Change those cubes Q*bert, and do it quickly.

"I was a little resistant because I couldn't quite wrap my brain around how to program it and do the collision detection," confesses Warren. "But I eventually came around and figured it out. This was why I enjoyed my collaboration with Jeff so much. He had great ideas that sometimes challenged me." With Warren's programming skills bringing Jeff's ingeniously bizarre characters to life on the distinctive pyramidal playfield, a new and unique arcade game had taken shape. It just needed a decent name.

"I added a word balloon, the '@!#?@!', which in turn inspired [sound engineer] David Thiel to generate the wacky gibberish which added so much to the character," Jeff recalls. One proposal was that the game might be named after the speech bubble utterance, until it was realised that no-one would be able to pronounce it. ▶

"The original sketches of Q*bert are in black and white. When it came time to colour him I arrayed him in orange and that was that"

JEFF LEE

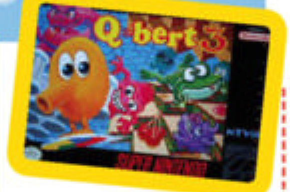


» The original arcade version with its expletive-inducing diagonal joystick control system.





» [SNES] Playing snake-bait in *Q*bert 3*.





» [SNES] One of *Q*bert 3*'s increasingly psychedelic levels.



» Previous *Q*bert* world record holder Doris Self at CGEUK 2005. She sadly died in 2006 aged 81.

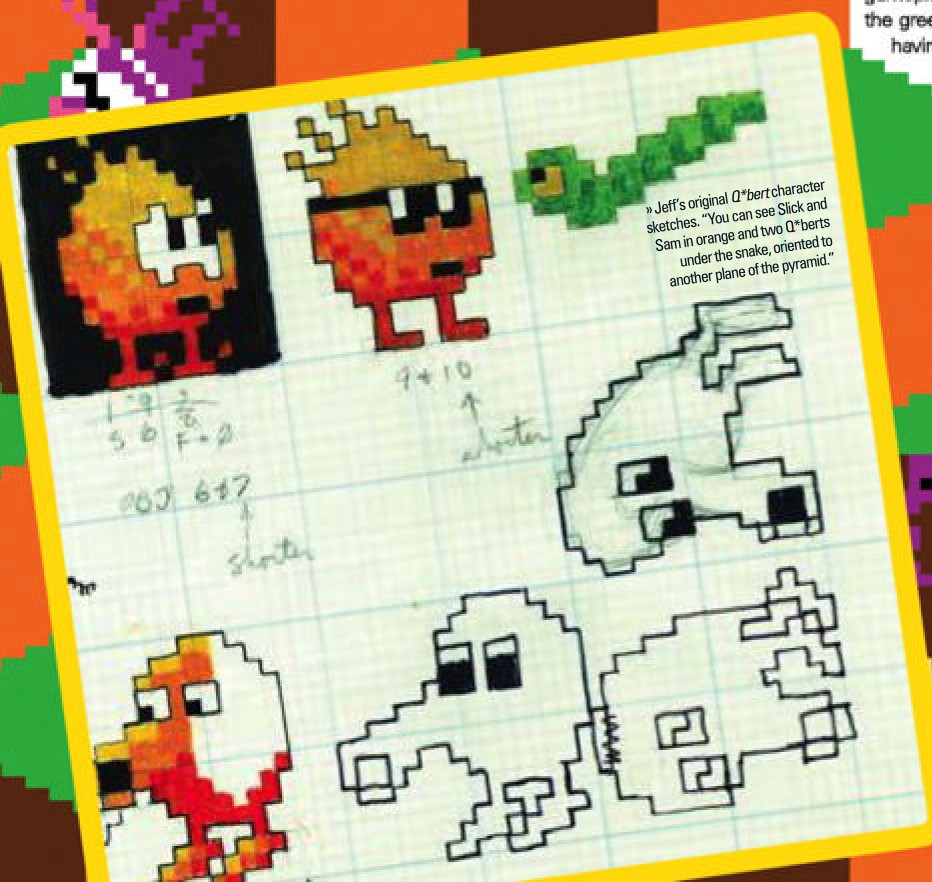
© Simon Roberts

"I had compiled a list of the names for the characters," Jeff continues. "One of the suggestions for the main character was Q*bert, a combination of CUBE (QUBE) and HUBERT. Don't ask me who Hubert is…"

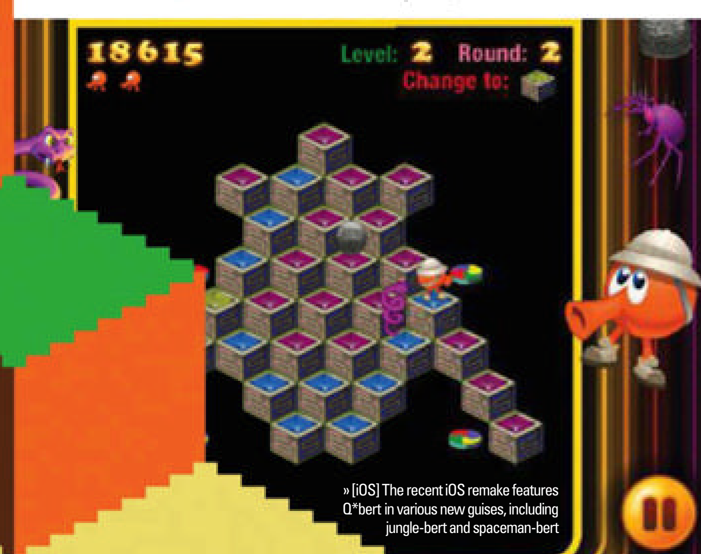
Q*bert has a decidedly fatal difficulty curve, with gravity-influenced death only ever a few joystick presses away, something which didn't go unnoticed by Warren, Jeff and the rest of the Gottlieb staff. "We had test cabinets that we'd put in arcades before it went into production," says Warren. "It was fascinating to watch people play it. Some people would put in a quarter, hop off the pyramid three times in a row and walk away in disgust. But the interesting thing was that they'd come back later and try again, especially if someone else was playing it and not dying. That was when we knew we were on to something…"

Understandably, Warren spent a lot of time tweaking *Q*bert*'s gameplay, adding features like the green enemy-freezing ball and having to hop on each block more than once to change them to the desired colour later in the game. He even toyed with having the floating discs move, a feature that later made it into an unofficial 'remixed' version. "It seemed that it was too hard for a lot of people, so I kept making it easier," he says. "Once it was released, some people could play it for hours and hours and I started to worry that I made it too easy, which is what prompted me to re-tune it into what became *Faster, Harder, More Challenging Q*bert* – but Gottlieb decided not to release that."

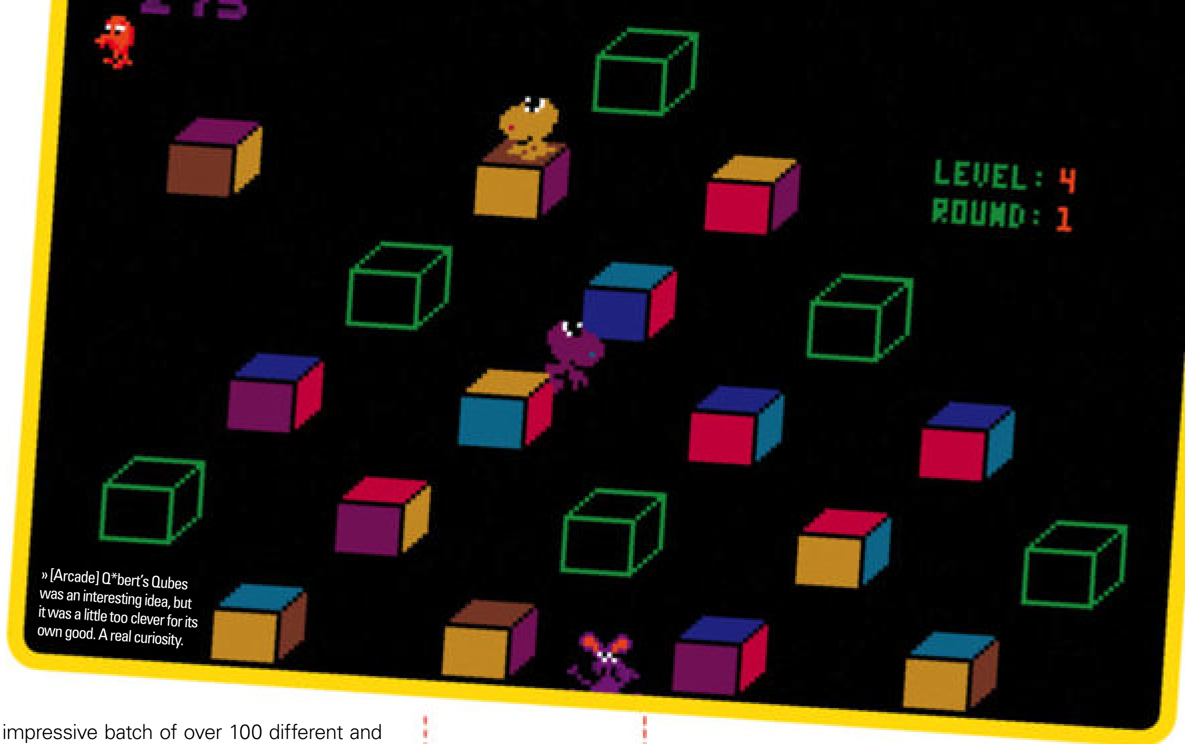
When the game was finally unleashed on the public, its arcade pulling power became evident. Q*bert was suddenly everywhere, his carotty, goggle-eyed visage peering from a range of merchandise, from Frisbees to board games, lunch-boxes, watches and, later on, his own TV cartoon series. Gottlieb had its first and, it would transpire, only hit coin-op. "I was asked to do a new *Q*bert* game and I passed," says Warren of the inevitable sequel, *Q*bert's Qubes*. The game was somewhat more complex than the original, introducing a Rubik-like puzzle element. "Another programmer, Neil Burnstein, had this idea and went for it, with my blessing," Warren continues. "But I think where the original had a nice balance of reacting to the environment and puzzle-solving, the puzzle-solving aspect of *Q*bert's Qubes* may have been a little too difficult for most people." Warren makes a sound point, as *Q*bert's*



» Jeff's original *Q*bert* character sketches. "You can see Slick and Sam in orange and two Q*berts under the snake, oriented to another plane of the pyramid."



» [iOS] The recent iOS remake features Q*bert in various new guises, including jungle-bert and spaceman-bert



» [Arcade] Q*bert's Qubes was an interesting idea, but it was a little too clever for its own good. A real curiosity.

Qubes is a very difficult game to grasp. It pushes too hard to make something that's more puzzley than the original game and, as a result, loses the simplistic appeal that made *Q*bert* so enjoyable to play. It's a shame, as conceptually it's a very sound idea and a seemingly natural evolution for the original game to take, blending the aforementioned Rubik-like puzzle elements with Tic-Tac-Toe. But, ultimately, it just ends up being a little too clever for its own good. It can be tricky enough just clearing a screen in the original game, but when you're contending with rotating cubes of different colours, avoiding monsters and trying to create a winning line, it becomes even more difficult.

This didn't stop home conversions of both games hitting many of the major platforms of the time. Warren, while flattered, remains slightly sceptical of some. "I remember asking Jeff to give me a frame of Q*bert with knees slightly bent so that, when he lands on a cube, he looks like he's absorbing the impact a bit," he says. "It was a very subtle effect, but it meant a lot to me. I was disappointed that some of the home versions neglected to do this."

The Super Nintendo was the platform of choice for the third official *Q*bert* game, the console's powerful 2D hardware offering the chance to create an impressive batch of over 100 different and often spectacularly trippy stages, framed by oscillating, kaleidoscopic backgrounds. The game was developed by Realtime Associates, a California-based company formed by a group of ex-Mattel employees fronted by Dave Warhol, the coder behind the Intellivision classic *Thunder Castle*. *Q*bert 3* also happens to be the prettiest of all of our bouncy, profanity-spouting hero's outings. Realtime Associates updated Q*bert, Coily and co with a new, more solid 'claymation' look, for which Jeff Lee was once again called in to provide design and animation. It featured some all-new enemies, far-out kaleidoscopic backgrounds and a host of colourful new levels layouts, which again scrolled as Q*bert hopped around them.

"The artists who supplied the background graphics were Connie Goldman, Diane Piepol and a dashing, pioneering, visionary artist from Germany named Brummbaer," recalls Dave. "They were given free reign to come up with anything odd and cool. It was Brummbaer who figured that, by rapidly moving a static animation depicting different animation states, the entire field could be seen to animate. Other images were distorted with sine waves perpetuated through the horizontal scroll registers. A lot of people thought they were distracting and would play with the backgrounds off."

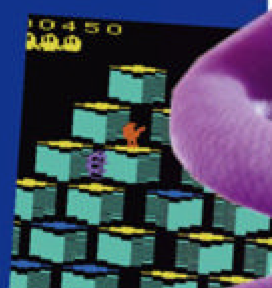
*Q*bert 3* was a far bigger game than its successors as well, but that need for expansion created additional issues for the team to solve. "We also felt, as a sequel, it should have some more depth. Because the original characters were so haphazardly creative, it was difficult to come up with things that felt that they belonged in that random-like universe," continues Dave. "This was not without its dangers. We added a character that looked like a big Hershey's Kiss and thought that was pretty cool. As it turned out, this is the Japanese cartoon equivalent of, putting it kindly, a pile of doggy doo. ▶

> **"We knew that there'd be a learning curve for players but we didn't know if people would take the time to figure it out. Luckily, most people did"**
>
> WARREN DAVIS

Converting Q*bert

Developers big up some of Q*bert's best conversions

■ Cosmetic differences aside, some of the home ports of *Q*bert* are actually very good, particularly the Atari 2600, which is quite an achievement given its primitive hardware. "Not having access to the source code, my job was to play through the arcade game and document how each of the levels worked," recalls designer Tom Sloper, discussing its creation. "We found the dip-switches on the motherboard, turned on infinite lives and I was able to document a lot of levels. The programmer's name was Dave Hampton. To make the cube tops he used tricks like triplicate sprites and background as opposed to foreground. Dave later programmed the Furby, and rumour has it that he's doing well as a result…"



■ The Game Boy conversion by Realtime Associates is another excellent port, also adding new level layouts that make it a pseudo-sequel of sorts. "Nobody wanted to do *Q*bert* on the Game Boy originally, as the only approach they could think of was with a single screen," recalls Realtime's president, Dave Warhol. "Realtime came up with the approach of scrolling the screen around Q*bert and it was picked up by Jaleco, at the time one of the larger publishers. We interspersed storytelling sequences every few levels, like *Ms Pac-Man*, to motivate players to play higher levels to see the story unfold. If I remember correctly, it had to do with Q*bert getting hit on the head with a coconut and then going through trouble to rectify the situation."







» [Game Boy Color] Hasbro's Game Boy Color remake features a new optional character, Q*dina.

Q*Bert Collector's Corner

■ German arcade fan Adrian Scheel has amassed a mightily impressive collection of *Q*bert* memorabilia over the years and has been generous enough to share some of his most treasured items with the readers of **Retro Gamer**. "Almost all the items are from the USA," says Adrian. "I especially like the plush characters (I always carry one with me when on holidays [see Q*bert's Travels boxout]), the frisbee, the fuzzy fun game, the arcade flipper, the Kenner figurines, the wind up figure and the Renzi savings box (I built myself a nice lamp out of it with Q*bert on top of a flying disc)."

See the entire collection at www.console-picture-page.de/catalog/



» [SNES] The redesigned characters in *Q*bert 3* were again created and animated by Jeff Lee.



Q*BERT PLUSH CHARACTERS

■ Fuzzy plush dolls manufactured by Kenner. Came in two equally adorable sizes.



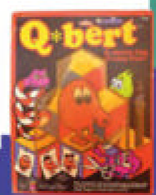
ARCADE GUMS

■ Chewing gum from Topps, sold in a box shaped like the arcade machine.



Q*BERT FRISBEE

■ Frisbee in the shape of one of the game's hovering discs, complete with Q*bert figure on top. Manufactured by Parker Bros.





Q*BERT FIGURINES

■ A complete set of six mini Q*bert characters, with Slick and Coily, made by Kenner.



FUZZY FUN

■ My sister's kids visited a few days ago and had free choice of the *Q*bert* items. They chose the Fuzzy Fun game and grew *Q*bert* beards.



COLORFORMS PLAY SET

■ Fuzzy Felt-style play set with 'pyramid' background board and stick-on characters.



Q*BERT PUNCH BALLS

■ Balloon-like *Q*bert*-themed punching bags (no, really).

RUBBER STAMP

■ Commercial Industries made funny word games using the 'Q' for new word creations. Stamp reads 'Take the I *Q*bert* test'.



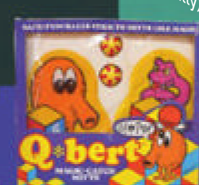
WIND-UP Q*BERT

■ A cute wind-up toy by Kenner that was really popular back in the day.



Q*BERT MONEY BOX

■ Orange plastic *Q*bert* money bank made by Renzi.



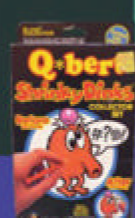
Q*BERT MAGIC-CATCH MITTS

■ A pair of *Q*bert*-themed mittens with two sticky Velcro balls, made by Synergistic Research Corp. Hours of fun.



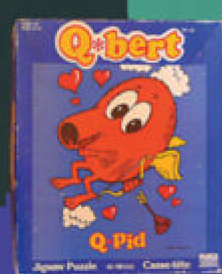
Q*BERT GAME WATCH

■ Manufactured by Nelsonic and featuring a miniature version of the arcade game.



Q*BERT SHRINKY DINKS

■ No home was complete without the Shrinky Dink. Little *Q*bert* characters that shrink in the oven.



JIGSAW PUZZLES

■ 60-piece puzzles made by Parker Brothers. Featuring 'Q*leopatra' and the loved-up 'Q*pid'.

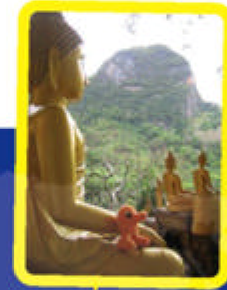
Q*Bert Travels

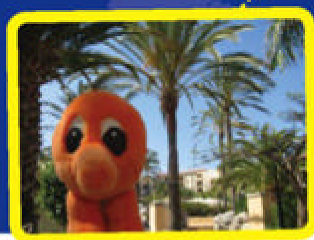
As told by Adrian Scheel

■ "It must have been around 2006 when I first carried a Q*bert with me, just for fun, and I had the idea to take photos of him in front of famous buildings and country-typical architecture or nature. Maybe I was inspired by the film *Amelie* where a woman carried a garden dwarf with her and made funny pictures in front of the Eiffel Tower, Westminster Abbey and so on. Now I cannot go anywhere outside the country without taking him with me…

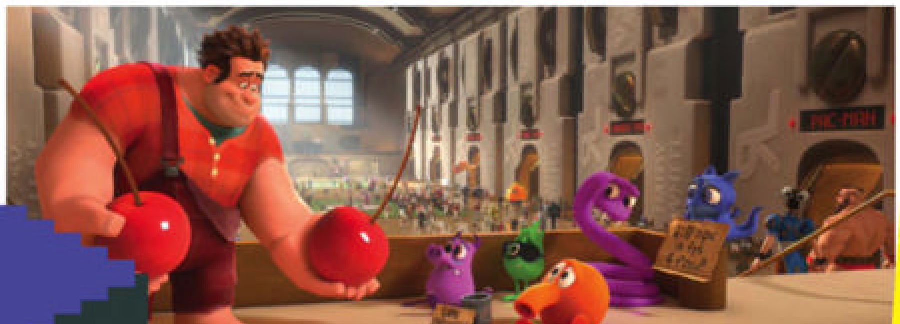
"One day, I met Oliver Soehlke (creator of pong.museum.com) while doing an interview with some students in the Computerspielemuseum in Berlin. I had Q*bert with me that day and Oliver fell in love with the travel idea. So, he created the website, and he got a Q*bert and also started traveling with him. Then, some friends and well-known collectors like Jens Brinkmann and Jens Klöpfel started to hang around and travel with their own. The thing is starting to get bigger and bigger and there are funny upcoming pictures including Q*bert in the legendary Dortmunder Westfalenstadion soccer stadium…" **For more globe-trotting Q*berts see: www.q-bert.pongmuseum.com**











» A homeless Q*bert plus Coily and chums in Disney's *Wreck-It Ralph*.





Q*BERT TABLETOP GAME
■ This snazzy tabletop featured a colour LCD screen and played a more than passable version of the arcade coin-op.



LUNCH KIT
■ Perfect for *Q*bert*-related school dinners and complete with themed lunch-box and matching Thermos flask.

I can only imagine what the Japanese players thought of that…"

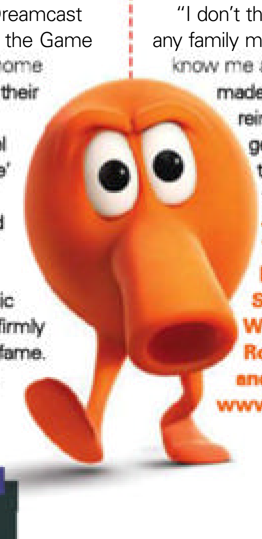
Although this was the last outing in the franchise to be produced by Realtime, Dave reveals that there could have been another all-new *Q*bert* title in the works after the SNES game. "We pitched a side-scrolling *Q*bert* adventure to a few publishers, where he still had the discreet hops," he tells us, "but were never able to get it off the ground. It featured flat areas mixed in with elevated areas, but it never made it to prototype."

Q*bert's last major gaming outing came with the 1999 3D remake by Hasbro, released for the Playstation, Dreamcast and PC, plus a 2D remake for the Game Boy Color. Unfortunately, the home console versions drew flak for their control systems and the overcomplicated level designs of 'adventure' mode. Thankfully, the package included a pixel-perfect translation of the original coin-op classic that put its creators firmly in the arcade hall of fame.

"Everything just came together in this game in terms of the talents of the team," Jeff muses. "The stars never did align again in the same way for our other games, unfortunately. But a little piece of work I did many years ago found a happy home in the memories of many people."

Seeing Q*bert in last year's Disney feature *Wreck-It Ralph* was something that Jeff and Warren could proudly show off. "Oh, yeah, I've always been granted an iota of awesomeness among my kids, cousins, nieces and nephews and some of their friends, no matter how else I annoy them," quips Jeff.

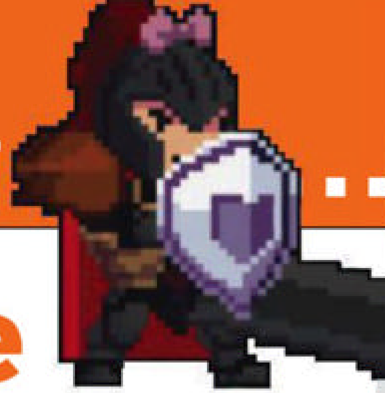
"I don't think it raised my standing with any family members," admits Warren. "They know me as me, rather than the guy who made *Q*bert*. But I'm glad that it reintroduced Q*bert to a new generation. I've always believed there was more to the character than was ever explored. I still do."



Thanks to Warren Davis, Jeff Lee, Dave Warhol, Adrian Scheel, Thorsten Ludwig, Kim Wild, Robert Hazelby and Simon Roberts. Visit Jeff's site for art and *Q*bert* related-goodness: www.qbertlee.com

A MOMENT…

Teddy Lee





This month we've decided to talk to Teddy Lee, the designer behind the brilliant new retro roguelike Rogue Legacy

Who is Teddy Lee?

Teddy Lee has been working in the industry for the past five years and is part of Cellar Door Games. He's worked on a variety of formats, from mobile to internet web games, and has recently finished work on the excellent *Rogue Legacy* – a roguelike that combines *Spelunky* with *Demon's Souls* and *Super Metroid.*

Where did the inspiration for *Rogue Legacy* come from?

Our main source of inspiration was *Demon's Souls*, with *Castlevania* being a close second. Everything else was designed as a way of resolving issues we've had with the roguelike and RPG genre. We're very mechanically driven, so we like to think up solutions to gameplay problems and then wrap a thematic around them.

What was the hardest thing to create from a technical point of view?

It's probably the collision system that gave us the most headaches. There were all these fringe cases where enemies would fall through the ground, or other things, which we'd have to constantly go back to and try to fix. And, oftentimes, a fix for one collision bug would result in another appearing or it would undo the work on something that was resolved prior. So we would frequently have to 'fix' the same collision bug multiple times.

Why choose 2D visuals?

We like 2D. 2D is cool. It's also way cheaper. We also have no idea how to do 3D so we just stick with what we know.

Have you been surprised by its success?

Totes McGoats. The reception for our game has been amazing, and we're really appreciative of our fans for all the help we've gotten by them spreading the word and letting their friends know. We literally had no marketing budget. Our trailers were made by our brother and, like, that was it. The YouTube community also helped us out immensely. When the game was first announced not much press was given. A few sites picked it up, like Rock Paper Shotgun, Destructoid and Kotaku, but for the most part it was the YouTube Let's Players, showing off videos of the game to their subscribers, that really helped to get *Rogue Legacy* out there.

Will you be expanding the game by adding new areas?

We don't know yet. When we made this game we crammed in as much as we possibly could. Literally, we were adding in features or fixes up until about three hours before launch. We've been working on trying to iron out as many bugs for people as possible and we've been busy trying to get the ports done first. So we have a lot of work ahead of us before we can think about future content for the game.



» [SNES] Teddy is a massive fan of *Super Mario RPG*, praising the way it blends different genres together.



What's your favourite game and why?

My two favourite games are probably *Super Mario RPG* (SNES) and *Braid*. *Super Mario RPG* because it brought a whole slew of new mechanics to a very established genre and tied it into a platforming system which, I think, even the quasi-sequels (*Paper Mario, Mario & Luigi* etc) have been unable to capture. It's also one of the most charming games I've ever played. Also, *Braid* because it is extremely innovative and the fact that it does so many things right and so very, very little wrong.

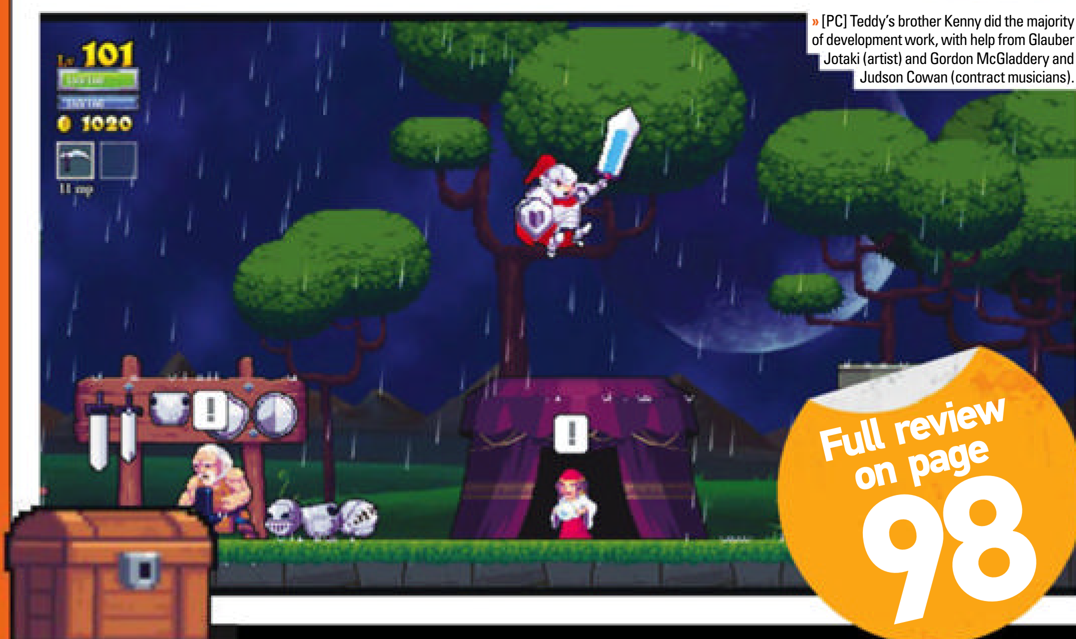
Why do you think the PC has so many diverse games?

Probably because of the low barrier to entry. More accessible platforms will drive more creative ideas, especially because everyone's generally on a low budget. And, when you don't have the money to polish your product, you need to rely on the ideas to stand out from the crowd. I think that's probably why the Flash community makes such creative games. Low barrier of entry, low cost, low development times and massive competition.

Which industry developer impresses you most and why?

Edmund McMillen for his creativity and development speed, Jonathan Blow for his design and standards of quality and Shigeru Miyamoto because he creates genres.

» [PC] Teddy's brother Kenny did the majority of development work, with help from Glauber Jotaki (artist) and Gordon McGladdery and Judson Cowan (contract musicians).



Full review on page 98



Super Castlevania IV

It heralded the evolution of the franchise into 16-bit and was a technical showcase for the SNES. John Szczepaniak speaks with main programmer and total director, Jun Furano – known by his real name, Masahiro Ueno

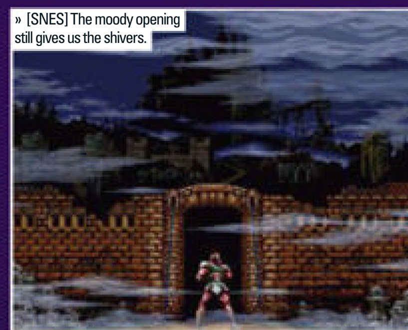


IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** KONAMI
- » **DEVELOPER:** KONAMI
- » **RELEASED:** 1991
- » **PLATFORM:** SNES
- » **GENRE:** PLATFORMER

Masahiro Ueno – or Mitch to his friends – has been involved with a lot of amazing games. Not that you'd always know this, as he was often credited as Jun Furano. "I used 'Jun Furano' as Konami did not allow us to use real names in game credits back then," reveals Ueno. "I made up the name after a Japanese TV drama called *Kita No Kunikara*. It took place in Furano, Hokkaido, and Jun was one of the main characters." This fish-out-of-water series was very popular in Japan, and involved a father taking his two children to live in the countryside.

It was common policy in the old days not to credit developers, or to do so under a nickname. Western fans have speculated if it was to prevent headhunting – the impression being that, in Japan, with the 'job for life' culture at the time, people seldom changed jobs. "I think it was to prevent headhunting," says Ueno.


» [SNES] The moody opening still gives us the shivers.

"People move more often these days, but many of my old friends are still with Konami."

Unfortunately, this discrepancy with names means that websites aren't always complete. "MobyGames is missing some of the games I worked on," admits Ueno. "Such as *Track & Field II* on the NES, *Lethal Enforcers* for the Mega Drive and many more recent games." As a fresh university graduate when joining Konami, Ueno's first game was an educational title for the Famicom Disk System that was ultimately cancelled. His second game, which was his first to ship, was porting *Metal Gear* from the MSX2 to the Famicom in just three months. Changes



were made at the request of management to differentiate the two versions – this also due to the limitations of the available Mapper chips. It was still an impressive achievement, and the game sold copious amounts in America.

Ueno continued to work with the Famicom on Japan exclusive games like *Ganbare Pennant Race!* and *MADARA*. In later years, he supervised Konami classics such as *Contra III* and *Axelay*, and played an integral role in the *Lethal Enforcers* series (including as an actor in the sequel). But, his first 16-bit role was *Super Castlevania IV* – aka *Akumajo Dracula* in Japan – as the main programmer, enemy and boss programmer, as well as overall director.

Super Castlevania IV was released in October 1991 for the Super Famicom, but working out when development started requires some detective work. For the sake of clarity, hereafter all mainline *Castlevania* games will be referred to as *CV*, followed by their number. "I don't recall exactly when we started the project," ponders Ueno, thinking back. Describing his thought process, the feeling is that it could have been in early 1990, but then he has a revelation: "*CVIII* on the Famicom was developed almost in parallel with *CVIV*, by the same people behind *CV* and *CVII*. We all worked closely with the sound team – Konami had the best sound team and they really did a great job." This is fascinating for several reasons. Firstly, the main team behind *CV* has never been disclosed as the original release featured fictional names. It also means that the original NES trilogy was developed by the same core team, while Ueno's team was brought in to get to grips with the new Nintendo hardware.

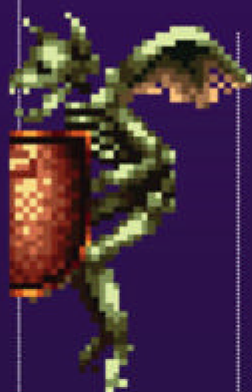
CVIII was released in Japan on 22 December 1989, meaning that Ueno would have had to have started before this, possibly using only proposed design specs for the as yet unreleased Super Famicom. "You are right," he concurs.



» [SNES] Curiously, statues of vampire hunter Sypha Belnades seem to stand outside Dracula's castle.

"We started with a small R&D team, without actual dev kits. We only had a hard copy of specification documents"

MASAHIRO UENO



"*CVIII* was released in late 1989, so the timeline [has to] match." Ueno adds, "I think we started *CVIV* almost as soon as we got the information from Nintendo, so we probably started the development of *CVIV* in 1989. I am not too sure though. It was more than 20 years ago!"

It's important to understand the underlying context of this era. The technological jump from the Famicom to the Super Famicom (released November 1990) was massive, with more noticeable results than the jumps we see today. How did it feel being on the cutting edge? "Naturally, we were so excited to work on the new console, as we felt we'd done everything we could do on the Famicom without additional chips in the cartridge." Ueno then reveals another clue that his team must have begun long before the Super Famicom had actually been released. "We started with a small R&D team, without actual dev kits. We only had a hard copy of specification documents."

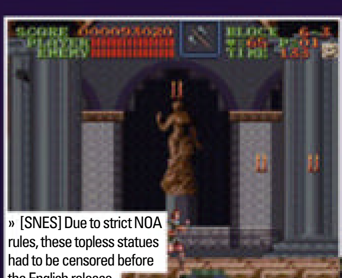
"The Super Famicom was definitely more powerful than the Famicom, especially in graphics and sound," states Ueno, "but the CPU is a bit more difficult to work with as it's more like a slightly faster 8-bit CPU with integrated bank registers," he continues, detailing the technical side of SNES development. "Unlike modern consoles, we had access to all the hardware registers and we had to figure out how to use those effectively, which I really enjoyed. But, it took us some time and experiments to find the right ways to use various tricks during actual gameplay."

CVIV was the ninth release for the series – previously, there were three mainline Famicom games, unique standalone titles for the MSX2 and arcades, two Game Boy releases, plus a Famicom spin-off featuring Dracula's son. *Castlevania* was obviously important for Konami, as Ueno concurs. "The expectations were really high, as it was already a successful franchise and now on the new 'super' hardware. Personally, I liked the original *CV* the most back then. Of course, I played them all before we finalized the direction of *CVIV*."

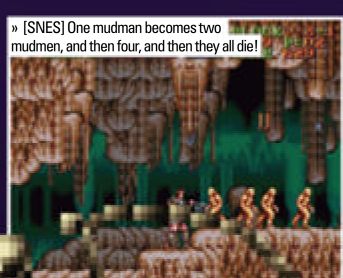
Ueno proudly declares, "I wanted to make *CVIV* a pure action game without any RPG elements, similar to the original *CV*." This also brings up overlap with ▶



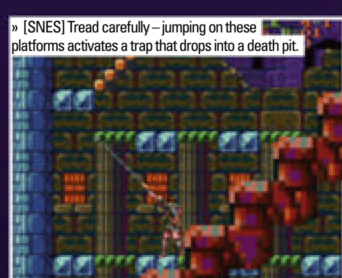
» [SNES] Mode 7 sections like this started out as experiments, and then Ueno and his team thought of how to add fun gameplay.



» [SNES] Due to strict NOA rules, these topless statues had to be censored before the English release.



» [SNES] One mudman becomes two mudmen, and then four, and then they all die!



» [SNES] Tread carefully – jumping on these platforms activates a trap that drops into a death pit.

Rogue's Gallery

Your guide to Super Castlevania IV's superb bosses

MEDUSA

One of the series' most iconic enemies – appearing in just about every game, and based on the Greek legend of Perseus. In a beta video it seems that this boss appeared slightly different to the final version.

KORANOT

Known as Big Stone in the Japanese manual, the golem boss is Ueno's personal favourite. It first appeared in the *Haunted Castle* arcade game, and went on to feature regularly in the series.

PUWEYXIL

First seen in *Super Castlevania IV*. Known in Japan as Death Breath Head, the English name must be read backwards. It features a sprite-jointed tongue, impressive transparencies and real-time damage to the background.

ORPHIC VIPERS

Known in Japan as soutouryuu, meaning double-headed dragon, similar bosses also appeared in the earlier *Castlevania III* and *Boku Dracula-Kun*. It made a return in *Dracula X* on PC Engine and SNES.

THE MONSTER

Although not named as such, this iconic boss is unmistakably based on the creature made by Dr Frankenstein, as featured in Mary Shelley's eponymous novel. A series regular.

ZAPF BAT

One of the game's coolest bosses. Although giant bats have featured in just about every *Castlevania* game, only in *Castlevania IV* is one made out of possessed treasure!

AKMODAN II

Another series veteran appearing in most *CV* games, except this time he's been given a name in the US manual, reinforcing his Ancient Egyptian heritage.

SLOGRA

A unique boss created specifically for the final section of *Castlevania IV*, and one of the toughest. Slogra resembles a zombified pterodactyl. It was later re-used for *Symphony Of The Night* and subsequent games.

GAIBON

Another unique end boss created specifically for this release that you fight directly before Dracula. As with Slogra, Gaibon was re-used for *Symphony Of The Night* and subsequent games.

DRACULA

The main attraction. Having said that, the Japanese series name of *Akumajo Dracula* actually places more emphasis on the Count's 'demonic castle', than the vampire himself.



» [SNES] It wouldn't be *Castlevania* without some well cured meat hiding in the walls.

its direct predecessor. He continues, "*CVIII* is a great game though. If *CVIII* had [already been released] before we started *CVIV*, I would have followed that direction." The two games definitely share some DNA though, notably the twin-headed water dragon boss and a cameo appearance by *CVIII*'s Sypha Belnades (in statue form), just before entering Dracula's castle.

"Because the team was small," explains Ueno, "everybody was involved in the design. Some ideas came from creative artists and others were from programmers' experiments. The whip feature was really a big part of the game and it was experimented with and implemented by Yaipon. We drew maps on paper but I think we changed a lot as we iterated the game." Yaipon, also known as Yaiman, was of course Mitsuru Yaida, who programmed the player's character. He left Konami along with others to form Treasure, later programming *Gunstar Heroes*.

Ueno, meanwhile, was in charge of boss programming, so we asked about their design and his overall favourite. "I came up with rough boss ideas first and then [additional] programmers came up with more detailed patterns as they implemented. We wanted to make earlier bosses relatively easy so that the players could figure out weak points and effective weapons without retrying too many times. For some bosses and traps we



» [SNES] Everything seems fine, until the red hands in the wall grab you and the enemy walks forwards.



decided to use Mode 7 first, then came up with ideas. I like the golem boss, simply because it uses Mode 7."

There's debate regarding whether *CVIV* is a remake of the original, which is controversial since it contains so many revolutionary elements – a better example of a remake would be *Akumajo Dracula* on the X68000 computer. But what does *CVIV*'s director think? "I consider *CVIV* as a remake of the original *CV* to some extent." But what about all the new features, like being able to leap on and off of stairs freely? "The original *CV* is a great game, but I felt it was a bit too difficult and many players got frustrated," continues Ueno. "The changes in the 'stair behaviour' was to give more control to the players and reduce the frustration. The new whip system was to introduce some new gameplay that had not been possible on the Famicom. We had freedom to make many changes, but we wanted to keep the game aligned with the original *CV*."

It wasn't always easy though, as Ueno tells us, "Like many other games, we had a long crunch time. Making a game on new hardware requires so much effort, so the crunch time lasted almost six months. But, we were so excited to work on the game. When the game was completed, as is always the case, I had mixed feelings. I was very satisfied with the fact we finally completed the game, but I also wanted more time to polish it."

Ueno is a bit unfair on himself though. Konami released a promotional video from an early build and, when you compare this early footage to the final version, it's astounding how much polish the team managed to add. "I was not aware of this promotion video, but it seems the footage was captured from an early build," admits Ueno, when given the YouTube link. We ask if anything was removed from this build due to memory restrictions, citing a snake-like boss which is different to the final Medusa. "I don't recall any severe memory restrictions back then, so I think these changes were made to improve gameplay."

CVIV is a phenomenal showcase of programming skill and design talent. Reflecting on this, we asked what Ueno was most proud of. "In addition to the new gameplay, I wanted to make the environment more interactive and lively. The music and sound effects really contributed to make the game's atmosphere spooky and real. So, I am proud of the atmosphere we created." And, would he change anything if he had a time machine? "I would probably add more branches to give the players a sense of exploration as found in other *Castlevania* games."

While the fantastic *Indiana Jones*-style whip swinging wasn't resurrected for later instalments, *CVIV* still redefined a template that influenced the series for years to come, notably through several unique enemies which featured in *Symphony Of The Night*. What about the other 16-bit console releases on PC Engine and Mega Drive? "I remember I gave some feedback to the Mega Drive team, as the lead and I worked on the same projects before. I only had a little interaction with the PC Engine team as they were in a different group," admits Ueno. "Both games are great, and [the] PC Engine version brought the game to the next level."

> "Everybody was involved in the design. Some ideas came from creative artists and others were from programmers' experiments"
>
> MASAHIRO UENO

In addition to its own lineage, *CVIV* influenced other developers, such as C-Lab with *Rusty* for PC-98 and DOS computers. In this case it was almost a direct copy, right down to the whip swinging. "No, I am not aware of this game," declares Ueno. What's interesting about *Rusty* is that it was released in July 1993, predating *Dracula X* on PCE by over three months. *Rusty* also featured a screen-filling 'item crush' attack, which first appeared in an official *Castlevania* game with *Dracula X*. According to a detailed analysis on VGMuseum there are about 16 major similarities with the later released *Dracula X*, implying that the influence went both ways.

In the years following *CVIV*, Ueno eventually moved to Konami's US branch, heading up games like *Project Overkill* for PSone. Looking over the list provided, Ueno has worked on more than 60 games over the last 25 years, including as a producer on *Lost In Blue*, the *Frogger* series, *TMNT* and various *Sims* games while at EA. He's an unsung hero in an industry that favours anonymity.

Before parting company, we asked if he knew why *Contra III* was ported to GBA but not *CVIV*, and if he'd followed the release of *CVIV* on the Virtual Console. "I was not a part of porting discussions so I don't know," says Ueno regrettably. "I do have *CVIV* on my Wii though!" And with that, join him in the Director's Commentary section as he talks us through the various stages...

Special thanks to *Castlevania* expert Kurt Kalata for his help with this feature.



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

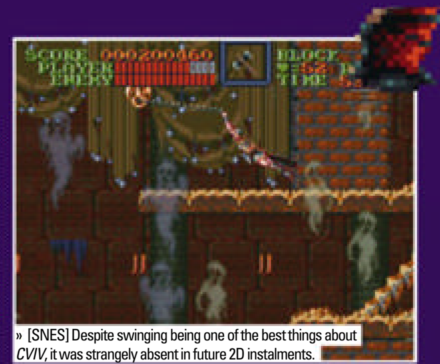
METAL GEAR
SYSTEM: FAMICOM
YEAR: 1987

MADARA II
(PICTURED)
SYSTEM: SUPER FAMICOM
YEAR: 1993

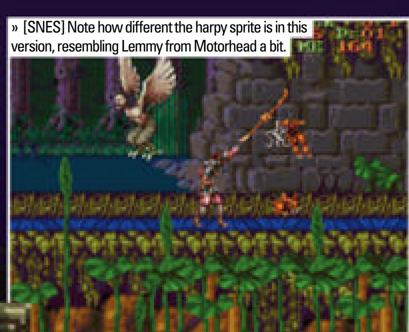
LOST IN BLUE
SYSTEM: DS
YEAR: 2005



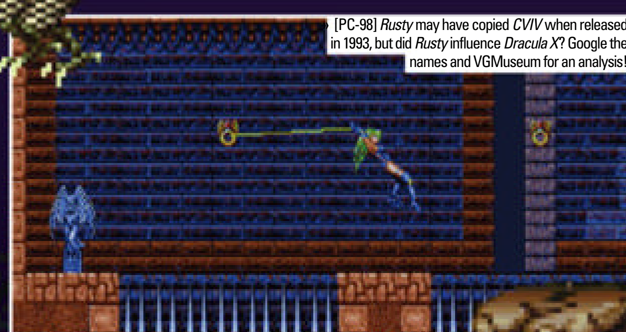
» Masahiro 'Mitch' Ueno – programming legend and all-round cool guy.



» [SNES] Despite swinging being one of the best things about *CVIV*, it was strangely absent in future 2D instalments.



» [SNES] Note how different the harpy sprite is in this version, resembling Lemmy from Motorhead a bit.



» [PC-98] *Rusty* may have copied *CVIV* when released in 1993, but did *Rusty* influence *Dracula X*? Google the names and VGMuseum for an analysis!

Super Castlevania IV The Director's Commentary

Masahiro Ueno gives us the lowdown on Super Castlevania IV's creepy castle



STAGE 3

Although there are no branching paths in *Super Castlevania*, we tried to make every stage different. There are four sections in this stage: you start outside, enter the caverns, climb a waterfall and finally, enter the moat area.



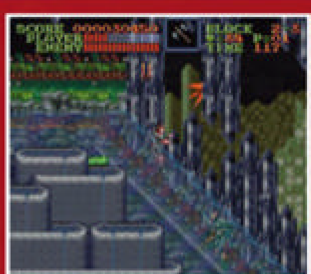
STAGE 4

This series of stages nicely shows how powerful the new hardware was: boss transparencies and jointed sprites, plus Mode 7 for the rotating room, spinning bridge, and final golem boss. I think it shows *Super Castlevania* at its best.

STAGE 5

This is a short stage and there's no boss at the end. Also, the timer has been reduced, because we wanted to increase the feeling of rushing forward as players finally entered Dracula's castle. Now it really begins!





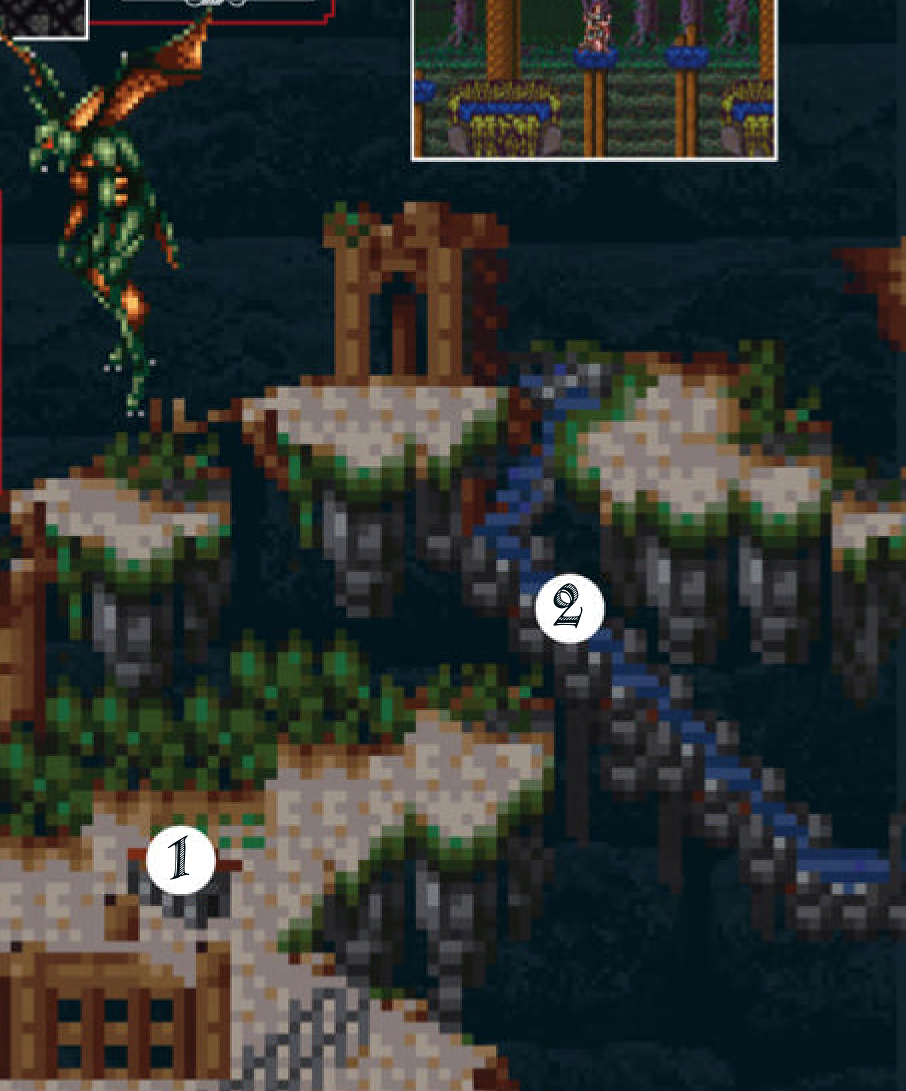
STAGE 2

Konami released a promotional video from early development. If you compare it to the final release, you can see how we polished the river section by adding more background details and improving the transparency effects. We also redid the Medusa boss.



STAGE 1

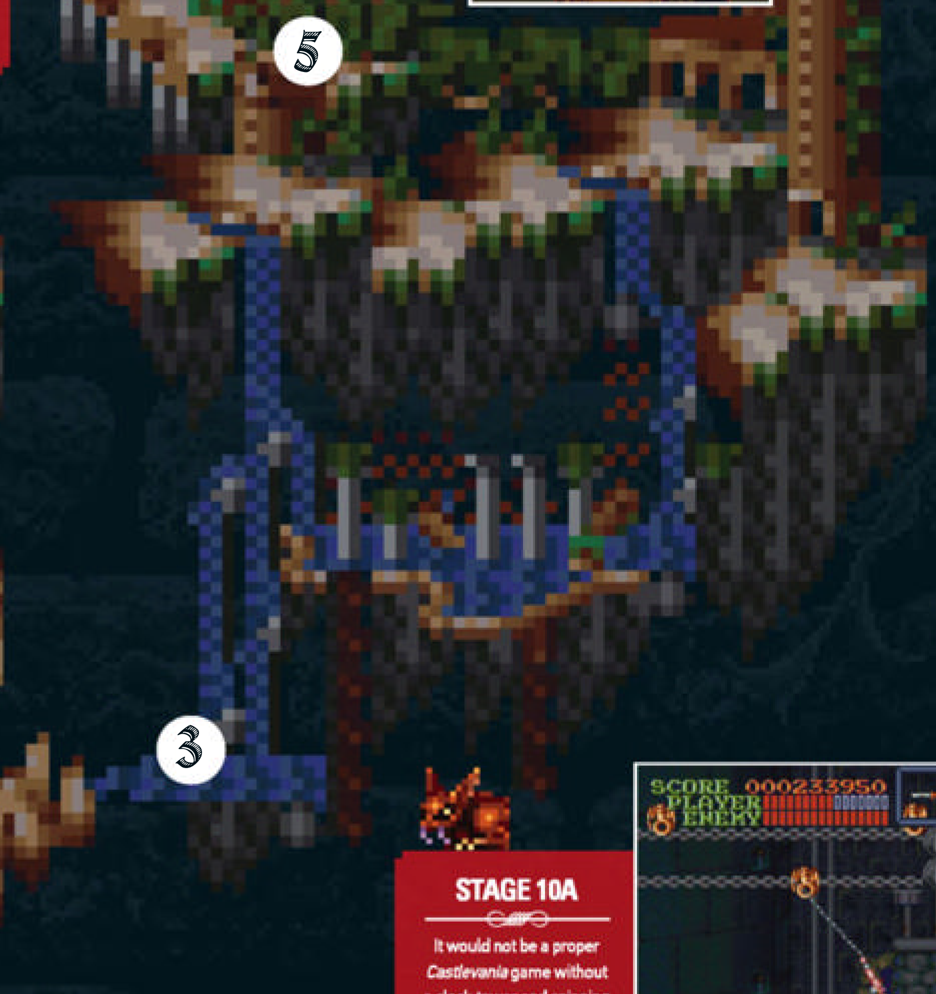
Some names were changed during translation into English. In the Japanese original, the flying horse heads were called 'Uma no Namakubi', loosely meaning 'freshly severed horse head'. In the English release it was changed to Mr Hed.



STAGE 6

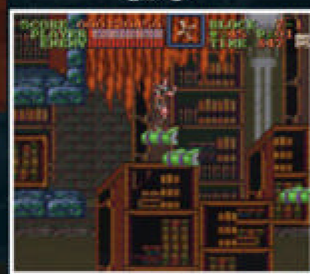
You only see one swinging chandelier at a time because Mode 7 only rotates a single large background layer. If you're stuck on the boss check the wall before the steps, we hid a 1UP. Also, did you find the crying man and his dog?





STAGE 7

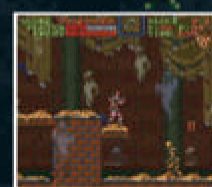
To keep players interested we continued to add new things to later stages. Here you will encounter the moving book platforms, and also two unique regular enemies: a giant centipede and a carpet monster that pushes you into spikes.





STAGE 8

I've been told players ask about the blood changing from red to green. I worked on both Japanese and English versions, so yes, I am aware of the changes. It's not serious – we were simply asked to change the colour palette.



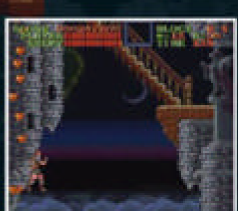
STAGE 9

Always keep an eye out for any whip hooks high up. There's one area where you need to swing across to reach some power-ups. If you fall, you'll notice we placead the hooks slightly too high to reach from the ground.

STAGE 10A

It would not be a proper *Castlevania* game without a clock tower and spinning gears. The Super Famicom allowed smoother animation for the cogs turning. Using your whip to hang from moving chains also allowed for new styles of gameplay.





STAGE 10B

I don't think many players discovered this at the time, but there's a secret area just before the final staircase to Dracula. Today with the internet, I think players have found all the secrets we added – or have you?

CLASSIC MOMENTS

Castle Of Illusion Starring Mickey Mouse

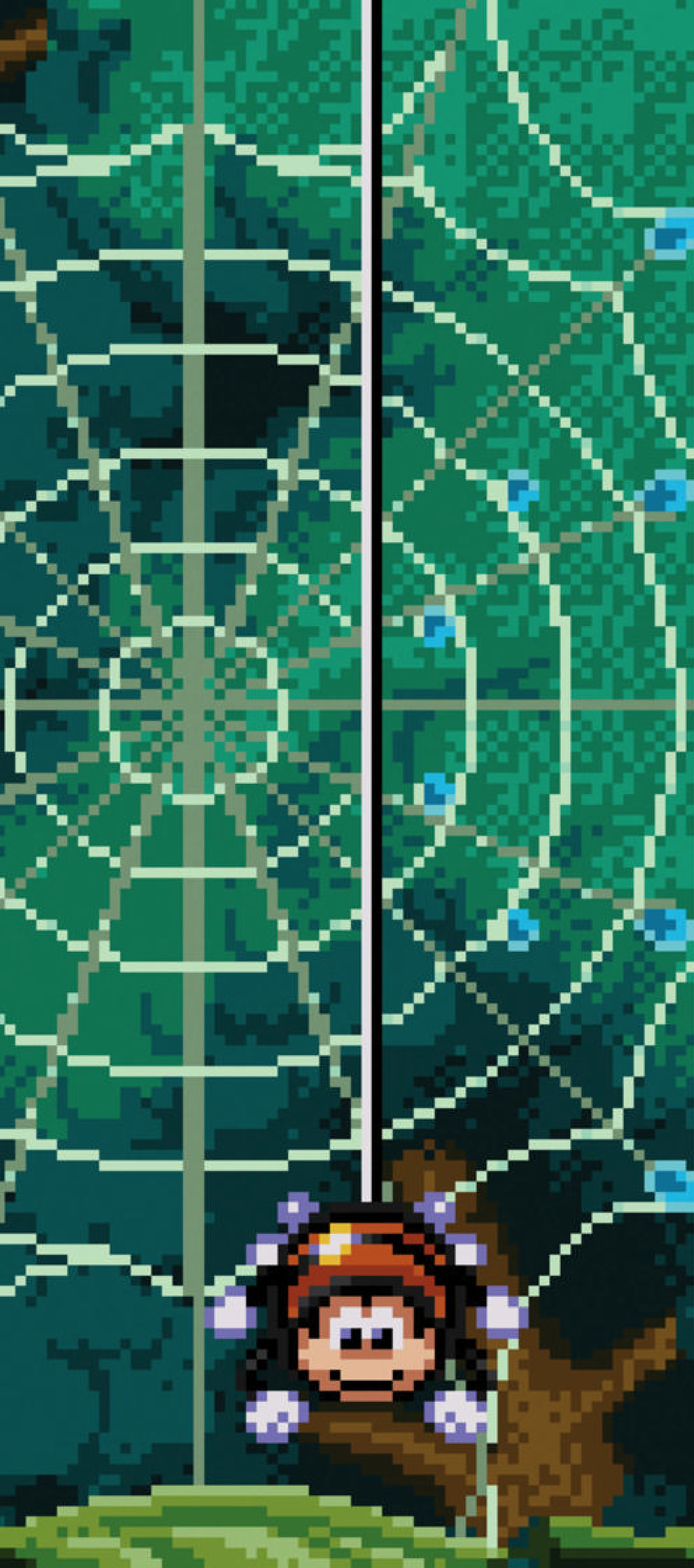
» **PLATFORM:** MEGA DRIVE » **DEVELOPER:** SEGA AM7 » **RELEASED:** 1990



***Castle Of Illusion* excels in so many respects, but its classic moments can mostly be attributed to its carefully considered level design.** The quality of *Illusion*'s varied stages is consistently high, making it hard to pick just one standout level, let alone one standout moment. However, the superlative platforming provided by the second section of the Enchanted Forest makes the short time you spend there particularly memorable. The whimsical mode of travel asked of the player is to leap from one floating leaf to another while avoiding the section's many spiders. Well-worked layouts, beautiful backdrops, accomplished pixel art and a dreamy score complement these simple, yet beautifully realised moments of gaming. The experience may be brief but, sometimes, less is certainly more.

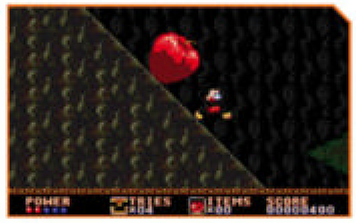
BIO

With its luscious coloured backgrounds, playful animation and cheerful, carefree soundtrack, *Castle Of Illusion* casts players in the lead role of a Mickey Mouse cartoon. This Disney-based platformer also boasts perfectly gauged gameplay and lovingly crafted levels, with your task being to rescue Minnie Mouse from a wicked witch by finding gems hidden in her mystical worlds. Created by Sega AM7, and part of a second wave of Mega Drive releases, the title helped to establish the system's reputation as the console of choice in Western markets, while also paving the way for the arrival of *Sonic The Hedgehog*. A remake is due later this year courtesy of Sega of Australia and will be released on Steam, PSN and Xbox Live Arcade.



MORE CLASSIC CASTLE OF ILLUSION MOMENTS

An apple a day



Castle Of Illusion has a reputation for being a little on the easy side, but the game's first moment of jeopardy is one that makes a real impression. The Enchanted Forest starts with a gentle introduction but, just as complacency sets in, the player is hit with a sucker punch as a giant apple appears and chases them down a hill, *Indiana Jones* style! It makes for quite an impressive set piece and is repeated later on in the game.

Dancing on the ceiling



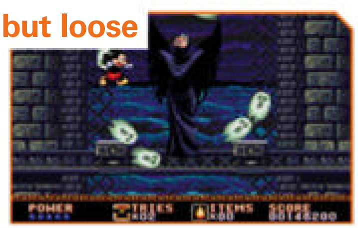
The third section of Toyland makes inventive use of cartoon physics by introducing gravity-inverting trip switches. Tripping these devices handily causes all on-screen opponents to fall to the ground. Or should that be ceiling? Either way, they lose their footing and plummet to their doom while you keep your feet firmly planted on terra firma, albeit upside down. It's confusing but cool, and is another excellent example of *Illusion*'s impressive level design.

More tea, Mickey?



In a surreal turn of events, bonus levels are to be found by jumping into one of two giant cups of tea where the aim is to swim past anthropomorphised sugar cubes in an attempt to collect gems and apples for additional bonus points. Swimming around the teacups provides a pleasant diversion and a dream-like change of pace from the more conventional platform fare offered elsewhere in the game. There's a swish graphical effect on display as well.

Every witch way but loose



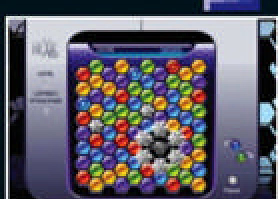
Castle Of Illusion provides several Disney-esque boss fights, including someone that looks suspiciously like Pete's Dragon, yet none are more visually impressive than the final showdown with Mizrabel. The encounter occurs in the witch's magical castle, where a fierce lightning storm provides a tense and foreboding atmosphere. Mizrabel is protected by ghostly apparitions and uses teleportation to avoid your attacks, but persevere, as defeating her is hugely satisfying.

BRAIN STRAIN

A BLUFFER'S GUIDE TO PUZZLE GAMES

Puzzle types

There are different puzzle videogame genres, a few of which are clearly defined, while others overlap. For example, Tetris could easily fall into both tile-matching and action-puzzle

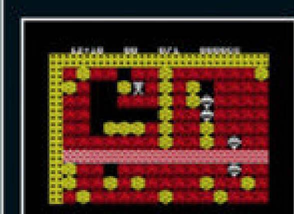


TILE-MATCHING

■ Most typically, a tile-matching game is either a falling block puzzler like *Tetris* or *Hexic*, or a 'match-three' game such as *Candy Crush Saga*. They became hugely popular from the late-Eighties onwards and are still going strong today.

TILE-BASED

■ Games including *Repton* or *Boulder Dash* can be termed tile-based due to their grid-like feel. Conversions of traditional puzzlers can also fall into this category, from Chess to *Scrabble*.



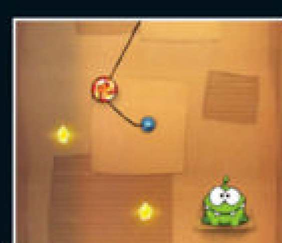


ACTION-PUZZLE

■ When a puzzle game involves getting the player's heartbeat to race in some way, perhaps via a sense of danger or a time-limit, it could be termed an action-puzzle – a genre that tends to include characters like *Lode Runner*.

PHYSICS-BASED

■ Games where an action leads to a realistic end-result. For example, in a game like *Cut The Rope* or *World Of Goo*, the principles of physics are put to good use.



When your fingers ache after another blast with a shoot-'em-up, it's time to let your brain take the strain. David Crookes looks at the rich tapestry of puzzle games that have been released over the years

Here's a puzzle: What is a puzzle game? A dictionary may well define it as a toy or a game that presents a problem which requires skill or ingenuity to solve it, but that leaves things wide open. Could we term *Tomb Raider* a puzzle game because it contains puzzle elements? Even a first-person shooter like *Call Of Duty* will involve mental legwork. It's mind-bending stuff.

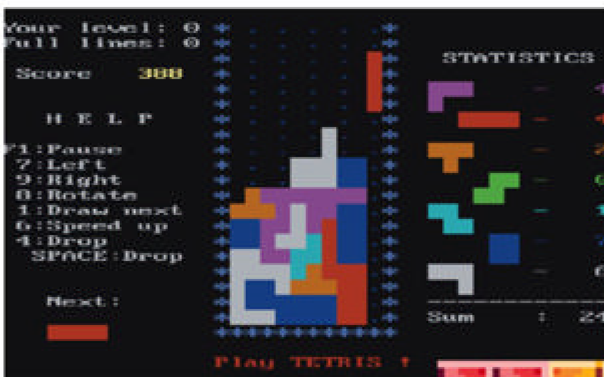
Thankfully, there's a game called *Tetris*. When we discussed puzzle games with our numerous interviewees, this enduring title was the first to be mentioned time and time again. To that end, we could just concentrate on *Tetris* throughout this entire piece. After all, it would appear the puzzle game genre started and ended with this Russian-made game from 1984. *Puyo Puyo*, *Dr Robotnik's Bean Machine*, *Columns* and *Pac-Attack* were all critically adored things-falling-from-the-top-of-the-screen-and-being-joggled-around-with puzzle games. *Amstrad Action* went as far to say these titles were "just sons of *Tetris*".

But, important as *Tetris* is – and we shall come back to it later – it is just one of a large number of types of puzzle games. Many involve blocks, some require catapulting birds into pigs, others require cutting ropes of matching fruit, but all need brainpower to solve. So, whether or not we are looking at hidden object games, physics games, tile-matching, reveal-the-picture or action puzzles, or whether we are just going for full-on traditional, it matters little. Puzzles are puzzles and that is the premise we'll be using here.

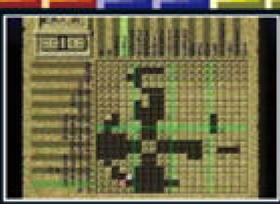
Puzzle games have been popular for centuries. The first jigsaw puzzle, for example, was created in 1750 and the first crossword puzzle was published in 1890 at a time when newspapers were beginning to see how attractive they were to readers. In 1972, a text-based game was created called *Hunt The Wumpus* that, while many would consider it an adventure game, was indeed an early puzzler. Gregory Yob created this maze game using BASIC on mainframes at the University of Massachusetts and it came in the form of a type-in. With 20 connected rooms and players hunting for a monster called Wumpus, the idea was to work out which room it was in and then arrow it to death.

Such maze games – and it's worth pointing out that they have a 4,000-year history – have long proved popular. *Gotcha*, in 1973, was the first maze arcade game. Atari manufactured the coin-op, and early cabinets had pink bulges rather than joysticks. These were believed to represent breasts and, indeed, the Atari staff referred to it as the 'boob game'.

"If a puzzle game is more like a maze and trying to find your way out then *Gotcha* is a perfect example," says Steve Bristow who, along with Steve Mayer and Larry Emmons, was part of the team behind the Atari 2600 but started work at the company during the early Seventies. "You and another person had to manoeuvre between the walls to get to each other. ▶



» [DOS] Alexey Pajitnov's *Tetris* remains one of the most popular puzzle games of all time.

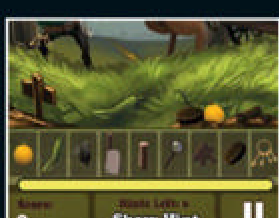


REVEAL-THE-PICTURE

■ If a puzzle has a series of pieces or puzzles – such as *Mario's Super Picross* – that will eventually reveal a photograph or an image or pattern of some sort, then it will fall within this category.

HIDDEN-OBJECT

■ With lots of hidden-object games on tablets and smartphones, this is a popular genre where you are shown items to discover and then scour the screen in a bid to find them. They often feature simple stories as well.



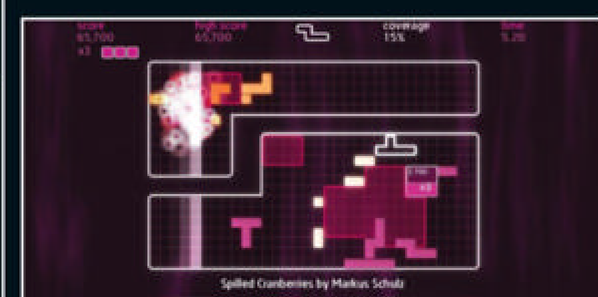


BRAIN PUZZLES

■ Whether they involve words, mathematics or just pure Mensa-style powers, these puzzles – which became incredibly popular thanks to Dr Kawashima – require an element of careful thought and an aptitude for learning.

MUSIC PUZZLERS

■ A more recent sub-genre, the music puzzler involves the use of audio. *Chime* and *Lumines* are good examples of this, the former involving blocks that created a tune when dropped.

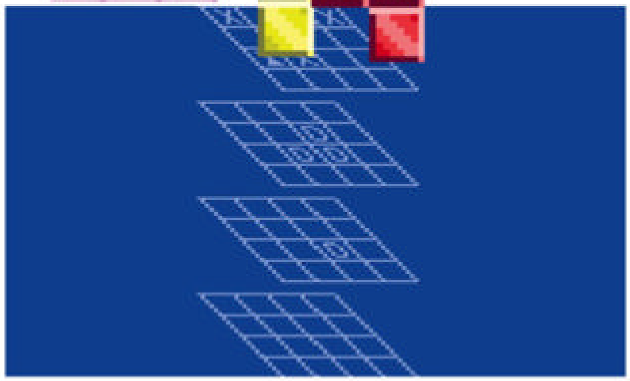


It was around in the days before the classic puzzles such as manoeuvring pieces. Just as well – the graphics didn't really support that kind of game at the time."

The success of *Gotcha* paved the way for similar titles. The coin-op 'rush-to-the-exit' game *Amazing Maze* by Midway was released in 1976, the same year as the first cartridge-based console puzzle game, *Maze*, which was developed by Fairchild Semiconductor for the Fairchild Channel F console. It was one of just 26 games for the system and consisted of a simple square block which the player controlled around a maze. Yet such a spartan look and feel didn't matter – puzzle games didn't need extravagant presentation, it was all about the gameplay.

In 1978, Ralph H Baer and Howard J Morrison created the memory skill game, *Simon*. It wasn't long before the concept was taken up by a videogame. *Mindbuster* was one such title which, having been released for the Microvision handheld console, became the world's first handheld puzzle game in the process. With six or 12 moves needed to solve a puzzle and tapping into reasoning ability, it allowed tests to be solved by pressing buttons in the correct sequence.

It seemed to be an era of innovation. Four years earlier, the Rubik's Cube was invented and helped to create a different type of puzzle, one that took in the third dimension. Atari took inspiration from it when it created the *Atari Video Cube* game in 1982, a solo-playing effort that required



"Your inner five-year-old knows that rocks and dirt are tons of fun"
Peter Liepa

the use of a joystick and a large dollop of concentration. This early Atari game stripped away the true 3D nature of the Rubik's Cube and instead had a sprite running across 2D blocks to swap-out the colours, although each set of blocks was one side of a cube. If the colour of the block matched the colour of the character, he couldn't step on it, forcing spatial thinking by the player and preventing it from becoming too easy.

Atari's inspiration actually ran deeper. In the same year it had worked on a game which seemed to fully emulate the Rubik's Cube in 3D but it was never released. Whether or not there was a programming issue or whether copyright or licensing problems surfaced is not known.



» [Arcade] Taito's *Qix* was an early puzzle game that walked a fine line between luck and skill.

What makes things even more confusing is that *Atari Video Cube* was actually re-released in 1984 as *Rubik's Cube* but, unfortunately, Atari founder Nolan Bushnell, *Pong* designer Allan Alcorn and Steve Bristow cannot remember either game, so it remains to be a mystery.

Still, the Atari 2600 – and its rival Odyssey 2 – were blessed with more than just maze and cube games. Established games were mined for their gameplay and there were releases of *Othello* and *Tic-Tac-Toe*. They put the art of thinking at the heart of gameplay which meant that those who didn't want to blast their way through a game and instead preferred a slower pace were being catered for. But, by establishing that computers could be a perfect platform for puzzles, such games allowed later, more innovative, titles like the unique *Qix* to flourish in 1981.

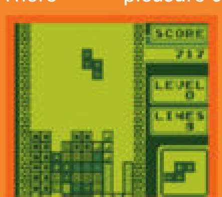
Qix was intriguing. The idea was to complete each screen by filling it with at least 75 percent of your colour by drawing stix or lines, before *Qix* (multicoloured lines) came to get you. In many respects this relied as much on luck as skill, which may go against the definition of a puzzle game. But such a combination has become commonplace in the genre. With a lot of puzzle games players are encouraged to keep trying to get better and, in many ways, they always lose. The principle of effectively only allowing players to control how long they can go on for before they do lose is prevalent among so many puzzle games.

Play the game

Tetris is the most well-known puzzle game of all time. We talk to creator Alexey Pajitnov and Henk Rogers, the man who took the game outside of the USSR



Why is *Tetris* so iconic and what makes it so addictive and popular?
Alexey Pajitnov: I've always said that *Tetris*, at its core, is fundamentally a simple game that's easy to understand. There is also a visual and intellectual challenge to the game that makes it very appealing, especially because it's human nature to be challenged to fix things. I created *Tetris* almost 30 years ago, and that we are still talking about it today tells you something about its popularity.



Henk Rogers: I believe that *Tetris* touches a basic human pleasure centre, which is to create order out of complexity. The geometric shapes are universal and equally appeal to all cultures, age groups and both genders. It really helps that the game is easy to understand and therefore quick to learn. So, the game's popularity is based on the fact that people can quickly and easily find a basic pleasure center and stay there for relatively long periods of time.

Puzzles games remain extremely popular today. Why is this?
AP: Puzzle games are quiet and subtle and rarely demand more than just your concentration. Typically, puzzle games have challenges that are short and clear, making the goal quite easy to understand. Other genres of games tend to be rather exclusive, but puzzle games have an inherent inclusiveness to them. It also helps that people like to feel smart as they're solving them.

HR: Puzzle games rely on basic mathematical (geometric) concepts. This means they do not rely on popular characters (like *Mario* or *Angry Birds*) or on popular game mechanics (adventure games or farming games). They rely on timeless concepts. Euclidian geometry is not a fad, it's how we have been building things for the last 2,000 years.

What lessons can be learned from looking at *Tetris*?
AP: To me, *Tetris* is a game – a very fun game – but its intent was never to teach any lessons. Nevertheless, I've heard it might help with reaction time and making decisions quickly.

HR: KISS! When you find a great game, don't bury it in a mountain of fancy graphics and special effects. Making chess pieces colourful and animated does not make chess a better game. In fact, more decoration is just distracting. *Tetris* is a simple game. If you find a simple game that works, Keep It Simple, Stupid.

If we had never played *Tetris*, how would you sum it up in 20 words?
AP: Different shapes fall down. Pack them together as dense as possible so they disappear, giving you more space to play.

HR: *Tetris* is a very compelling computer game in which you manipulate falling geometric shapes into forming solid lines of blocks.

Evolution of Tetris

Tetris has been taken as the basis for many similar puzzle games. Here we look at seven key departures



WELLTRIS

■ **YEAR:** 1989
■ **SYSTEM:** VARIOUS
■ **DEVELOPER:**
■ INFOGRAMES
■ SPECTRUM HOLOBYTE

Instead of blocks falling down the screen, this game by Alexey Pajitnov had them cascading down a well along one of the four sides into a bit made up of an eight by eight square grid. Each of the four walls had to be kept as clear as possible by the player.



HATRIS

■ **YEAR:** 1990
■ **SYSTEM:** NES, GAME BOY, ARCADE, TURBOGRAFX-16
■ **DEVELOPER:**
■ BULLET PROOF SOFTWARE

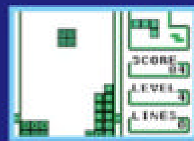
Another game designed by Alexey Pajitnov, *Hatris* had hats rather than blocks falling from the sky. Five identical-style hats needed to be stacked in order to clear them. As well as making an appearance on the NES and Game Boy, the game also made it to the arcades.



3D TETRIS

■ **YEAR:** 1996
■ **SYSTEM:**
■ VIRTUAL BOY
■ **DEVELOPER:**
■ NINTENDO

Sometimes *Tetris* played games with your mind and you'd look at brick walls and try to rearrange them. With this Virtual Boy exclusive, the mind-bending properties of *Tetris* went up a notch as you looked into a 3D playing field with a contraption strapped to your head. It was the Virtual Boy's final release.



TETRIS PLUS

■ **YEAR:** 1996
■ **SYSTEM:** ARCADE, GAME BOY, PLAYSTATION, SATURN
■ **DEVELOPER:**
■ BULLET PROOF SOFTWARE

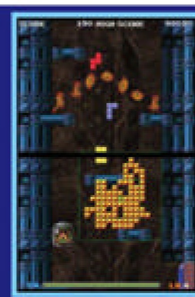
As if to give rise to the argument over whether *Tetris* is actually a puzzle game, *Tetris Plus* added a puzzle mode that was actually quite arcade-like in nature. You had to help a professor get to the bottom of the screen using the usual *Tetris* methods before a spiked ceiling came down on his head.



THE NEW TETRIS

■ **YEAR:** 1999
■ **SYSTEM: N64**
■ **DEVELOPER:**
■ NINTENDO

Released in 1999, it was time for a fresh spin, so the Nintendo 64 game provided it by allowing gamers to create four by four squares of four pieces that turned gold or silver. Three upcoming pieces were also shown and a spare piece could be set aside for later.



TETRIS DS

■ **YEAR:** 2006
■ **SYSTEM: DS**
■ **DEVELOPER:**
■ NINTENDO

Tetris was the killer game for the Game Boy and became a cultural phenomena because of it. By the time it was released for another Nintendo handheld – the DS in 2006 – the familiarity of the concept meant it wasn't quite the same must-have game but it did have online and local multiplayer.



TETRIS PARTY

■ **YEAR:** 2008
■ **SYSTEM:** WIIWARE, DSIWARE, WII, DS
■ **DEVELOPER:**
■ HUDSON SOFT
■ TETRIS ONLINE
■ NINTENDO AUSTRALIA

Can *Tetris* be a party game that gets you up and out of your chair? It seems so. *Tetris Party* for the Wii supported the Balance Board, of all things, and encouraged multiplayer. You had to lean left or right to move the blocks and lean forward to drop them. Squatting rotated them.

"You can always blame bad luck and not feel too bad," says PopCap founder Jason Kapalka. "In some ways that's a very casual approach and why a lot of games for kids – board games and so on – rely heavily on dice rather than something like Chess because it takes that burden of failure off the player and puts it on this random chance."

Developers seemed to find ways of putting a fresh spin on old formats. Sliding block puzzles were invented in 1880 but, in 1981, *Loco-Motion* showed how computer games could update such an old format by including a train. Players had to move track pieces into vacant squares to ensure that the train would continue to shunt along while also picking up passengers at the stations that surrounded the playing area. With a crazy train that your locomotive had to avoid thrown in for good measure, it was an example of an early arcade-puzzler that kept gamers on their toes by introducing an element of danger. Eight years later the principle still remained popular. *Pipe Mania* didn't have sliding blocks, but you had to place pieces of pipe on a board to prevent fast flowing flooz from oozing out. Puzzle games got the adrenaline pumping.

The intervening period was a golden one for puzzle games. Moving tiles became a recurrent theme. *Zenji*, *Confuzion*, *Rock 'N' Bolt*, *Collapse*, *Scarabaeus*, *Split Personalities* and *Deflektor* followed this trend. Puzzle games were not stuck in a rut, though.

In 1982, the first logic puzzle videogame, *Rocky's Boots*, was released by The Learning Company. Gamers needed to use a mechanical boot to kick squares, diamonds and crosses, connecting a series of logic gates to the boot in order to only kick the positive objects. This was also the year that *Q*bert* combined puzzles with platforming as the main character hopped onto cubes in a bid to change the colour of them all while avoiding a host of enemies.

And then, in 1984, came *Tetris*. "I've always said that *Tetris* is, fundamentally, a simple game that's easy to understand," says the game's creator Alexey Pajitnov. "There is also a visual and intellectual challenge to the game that makes it very appealing, especially because it's human nature to be challenged to fix things. I created *Tetris* almost 30 years ago, and given we are still talking about it today tells you something about its popularity."

Tetris proved to be a massive influence on puzzle games, in particular from 1987 when it appeared on US shores. Its popularity peaked at the end of the Eighties when it was bundled with Nintendo's Game Boy. Videogame designer and entrepreneur Henk Rogers had travelled to Kyoto, Japan in 1988 to meet owner and CEO of Nintendo Hiroshi Yamauchi. "I met Mr Yamauchi and I said to him 'I think I may have one of the most important games in the history of our industry but I can't get distribution to order more than 40,000 units,'" recalls Henk. "He calls in Shigeru Miyamoto and says to Miyamoto, 'Is this a great game?' Miyamoto says, 'Yes.' Yamauchi says, 'How do you know?' Miyamoto says 'because all of your employees including your accounting staff are playing *Tetris* during lunch and after work.'" Nintendo grabbed the game. Rogers' company, Bullet Proof Software, ended up selling 2 million copies on the NES and Nintendo sold over 40 million on Game Boy.

Like *Tetris*, *Boulder Dash* by Peter Liepa and Chris Gray was also released in 1984 for the Atari 8-bit computers and was ▶

» [Atari 8-Bit] *Boulder Dash* was a big hit for First Star Software, spawning lots of sequels.



Digital brain teasers

The classic puzzle games that we just can't stop playing



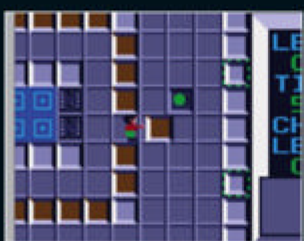
TETRIS [1984]

Russian-born Alexey Pajitnov made *Tetris* while he working as a computer engineer for the Soviet government's Soviet Academy of Sciences. Since he was under state employment, he was unable to receive royalties for the game. Following the end of the Cold War in 1991, he moved to America, founding the Tetris Company. In the meantime, Nintendo had snapped up the *Tetris* license, bundled the title with its Game Boy (shown here) and created history.



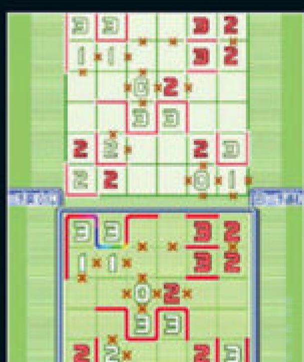
BEJEWELED [2001]

"There's definitely been a lot of interest in *Bejeweled* type games over the years like *Puzzle Quest* and *Jewel Quest*," says PopCap founder Jason Kapalka. *Bejeweled* was a tile-matching puzzle game that made its debut on browsers in 2001 and has since had three follow-ups and sales of more than 75 million, making it one of the most popular puzzle games of all time.



SLITHERLINK [2011]

SlitherLink is a logic puzzle that requires a good dollop of thought. Players have a series of dots on the screen and they need to connect them so that they form a loop. To make things trickier, there are numbers within the squares that the dots make up.



CHIP'S CHALLENGE [1989]

As the puzzle game that came to define the Atari Lynx to a certain extent, *Chip's Challenge* was originally going to be called *Tile World*. Chip McCallahan had to nip around each level collecting chips while working out which buttons to press, which doors needed unlocking and which monsters needed avoiding. Chuck Sommerville, who created the game, loved *Boulder Dash*: "It was the main inspiration for *Chip's Challenge*."



LEMMINGS [1991]

Players of *Lemmings* had a love/hate relationship with the little guys while doing their best to keep them alive, sometimes even aborting a level to try and save even one more. Other times, gamers took great delight in nuking the lot of them. "For its time, the sheer number of little guys wandering about was endearing and that again helped spur you on, literally making you squeal like a pig when you ran out of skill and all your lemmings started walking off a cliff to their doom," says artist Mike Dailly.





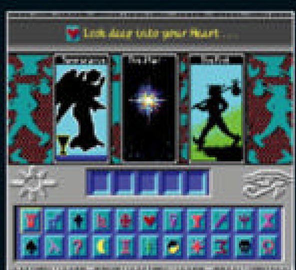
ANGRY BIRDS [2009]

It needs little introduction, given its massive popularity, but it showed just how a touchscreen could be utilised to devastating effect within a game. As time has gone on, the game has added a few little quirks and new ways for the birds to smash the scenery and destroy the little pigs but, at its heart, it's still about pulling back on a catapult and letting rip.



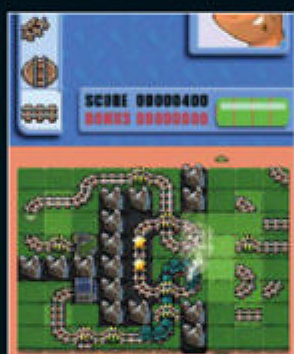
PUZZLE BOBBLE [1994]

Firing bubbles at other bubbles in order to create matches was the premise behind *Puzzle Bobble* or *Bust-A-Move* as it was otherwise known. Starring the dragons from *Bubble Bobble*, the game spawned a host of sequels and spin-offs and has been much-cloned since then. The latest *Bust-A-Move* can be found on the 3DS, taking it to a whole new dimension.



PIPE MANIA [1989]

Ported to virtually every platform at the time, *Pipe Mania* required players to place pieces of pipe on a board in order to prevent flowing flooze from leaking. The pipe had to be connected to an exit so that the gloop could work its way out, but you had no control over which piece you had to place – forcing you to try and work ahead.



THE FOOL'S ERRAND [1987]

It lists JJ Abrams as one of its fans and it is easy to see why this cult puzzle game by Cliff Johnson is rated so highly. It runs as a narrative which requires the solving of puzzles that reveal the way forward to continue the story. It includes memory puzzles, logic puzzles, jigsaws and more, with the gamer trying to discover the rules as much as the actual end result. Tricky and intriguing, it remains popular.



THE INCREDIBLE MACHINE [1993]

A superb physics-based puzzle game from the mid-Nineties that harked back to old cartoons in some respect, asking the player to arrange available objects so that they performed tasks that help reach an end goal. For example, you may need to get a ball through a hoop so you placed different pieces on the screen in order to achieve this. It was recently revamped and released on iOS.

extensively ported thereafter. Similar to the 1982 action strategy game *The Pit*, *Boulder Dash* was a casual brain-puzzler, the likes of which remain in vogue today.

"Everybody wants to engage their brains in problem solving," says Peter. "And not everybody has the reflexes or the bloodlust for first-person shooters. *Boulder Dash* had to be addictive enough for me to stick with it for the six months it took to develop. The basic mechanics of rocks and dirt are what drives the game – it's like playing in a sandbox. The other elements – the jewels, enemies, walls and so on – are there to shape your activities and give you goals. For me, it is an action puzzler that engages multiple parts of your brain – and your inner five-year-old knows that rocks and dirt are tons of fun."

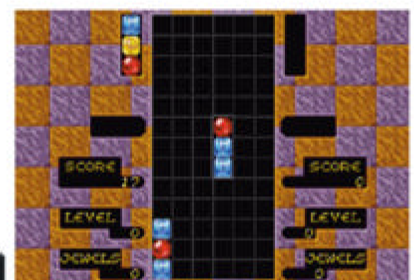
Boulder Dash was one of the first puzzle games to use physics. They were simple, which Peter says led to predictability, but they could be combined in a rich set of interactions. Such a thing is common today, so it would be stretch to say that today's developers have a lot to learn from *Boulder Dash*. "All I can say is that it's fairly difficult to come up with a novel set of physics that 'works', and by that I mean 'is fun and leads to a rich set of puzzles'," adds Peter.

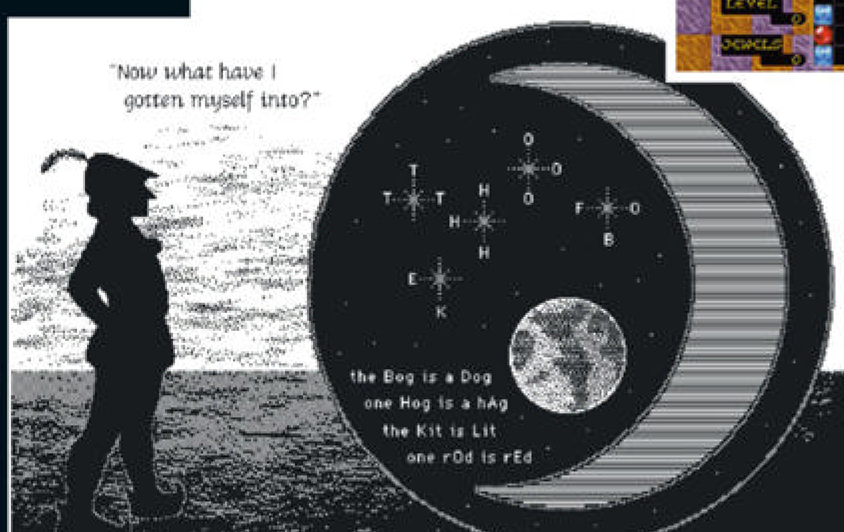
Another puzzle game worth of note is the excellent *The Fool's Errand*, which used meta-puzzles in a strategy fantasy game that had a well-crafted narrative. The game also contained a huge puzzle that could only be solved when other smaller ones were cracked and the gamer had to dig deep into the story for clues. It's was extremely popular at the time and arguably paved the way for games like the *Professor Layton* series, which now feature similar narrative puzzles to solve.

Tetris, however, defined the late Eighties, and developers were keen to create something that mimicked its success. *Columns* was Sega's effort to provide an alternative to Tetris and hit the arcades in 1990, before ending up on the Mega Drive and Game Gear where it went head-to-head with the Game Boy and sparked inevitable comparisons. The falling-tile genre was well and truly established. *Columns* – in which groups of three colour blocks needed to be arranged into sequences of three or more, whether that be horizontally, vertically or diagonally – became a classic game. The same could be said of *Chip's Challenge*, which was a puzzler full of character for the fledgling Atari Lynx in 1989.

Pac-Attack, which was influenced by *Columns*, did not quite have the same impact but was a good example of the trend to take existing characters from non-puzzle games and use them in brain teasers. Wario was in *Wario's Woods*. Kirby appeared in *Kirby's Star Stacker. Pokemon Puzzle League* was pretty much a clone of *Tetris Attack* and Dr Mario had his own *Tetris* clone. British gaming characters were not immune to this videogame synergy either – the Oliver twins stuck Dizzy into puzzle games too.

"*Fast Food*, a game inspired by *Pac-Man* but starring Dizzy, had only taken a couple of weeks to write which was half the time of our other games, so it felt like a fun challenge," says *Fast Food* creator Philip Oliver. "We decided quickly that another single screen maze game, *Kwik Snax*, was a good approach. We thought a maze game that allowed you to change the positions of the walls whilst playing was very interesting. We had this vague idea that we could push walls to change the maze and that Dizzy would push blocks into enemies to destroy them, much like dropping apples on the enemies in *Mr Do*."





» [Mega Drive] *Tetris* spawned a slew of imitators. This is *Columns*, Sega's tribute to Alexey's game.

» [Mac] *The Fool's Errand* blended puzzles with an engaging story to great effect.

RETRO GAMER | 43

In the early Nineties, puzzle games continued to be released. *Loopz* was a critical hit that involved making loops from shapes that had lines or angles etched on them. In *Rampart*, small blocks made up a castle wall that you had to defend in a game that mixed strategy and shoot-'em-up with puzzle elements that were inspired by *Tetris*.

But not everything involved tiles. *Lemmings* was developed by DMA Design in 1991. The player carefully guided lemmings across perilous terrain and tried to get as many of them home safely as possible while digging, building and blowing things up. It was the first puzzle game to utilise destructible scenery.

"It was the first real 'sandbox' game too," says *Lemmings*' artist Mike Dailly. "You had lots of skills and a world and you were let loose with them. This is why levels were complex to design and such a joy to figure out and complete. You could do them any way you like – sometimes, in a totally different manner from the way the original level designer thought of. The best levels were ones where there was only one obscure solution. This is because it was so hard to think of exactly the same solution as the original author."

As the Nineties rolled on, so too did the range and scope of puzzle games. *Super Puzzle Fighter II Turbo* was inspired by a beat-'em-up and was the first of its kind. *Puzzle Bobble*, which was also known as *Bust-A-Move*, was a tile-matching arcade puzzler that had a pointer device firing bubbles against other bubbles that has since spawned a vast number of clones. Taito knocked out some good puzzle games including *Puchi Carat* and *Cleopatra Fortune*. The third dimension also became important, whether for the PSone game *Intelligent Qube* in 1997 or the 3D *Tetris*-with-a-twist puzzler *Wetrix*, which was developed by Ste and John Pickford.

The Pickfords' Zed Two development house, which also produced a *Tetris* game in 2003, highlighted the circular motion of a lot of puzzle games in harking back to the Russian gem. Whether creating *Block Out* or *Boxxie* or trying a different perspective as with *Klax*, the splurge of wannabe *Tetris*



» [Amiga] *Lemmings* is another massively popular puzzle game, with a lot of sequels.

"I've always said that Tetris is, fundamentally, a simple game that's easy to understand"
Alexey Pajitnov

beaters continued. It just seemed to work so well and popular games emerged. *Puzznic* hit the arcades in 1989 and then ended up on home computers a couple of years later. It even ended up on the PlayStation in 2003. Plotting followed the same path and was actually ported to the GX4000, the only puzzle game ever to end up on Amstrad's ill-fated machine.

Puzzle games were so integral to gaming life that even Microsoft saw the potential of them when it placed *Minesweeper* in the Windows Entertainment Pack and then included it as standard from Windows 3.1 onwards. The basic premise had been used within computer games before – *Mined-Out* by Ian Andrew in 1983 is a good example of an early attempt – but its inclusion in Windows made it one of the most played games of all time.

Simplicity was not always on the agenda, however. 1990's *E-Motion* collided atoms and molecules. Yet in the mid-Nineties, RPGs and action games were beginning to dominate and, while puzzle games continued to be pumped out, the focus appeared to be shifting. The likes of the *Puyo Puyo* game, *Kirby's Avalanche*, and its accompanying trash talk was encouraging for the genre, but there was a slight dip before things began to pick up again.

Then, the internet became popular and paved the way for titles such as *Poppit!* and *Word Whomp*. A new audience was growing fast.

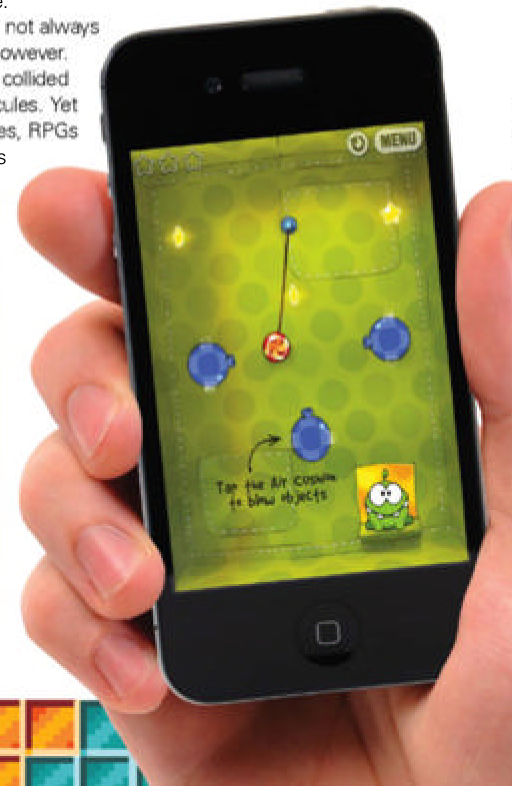
"It was largely women and mostly older than your traditional gamer was," says Kapalka. "I mean, at the same time the idea of calling them casual gamers was a bit of a misnomer because some of these people would spend a great deal of time playing these games online and so you could hardly say they were not taking them seriously."

Kapalka started PopCap in 2000. "We were doing more original stuff like *Bejeweled* and a bunch of other puzzle games, and then it was a question of what makes for an interesting puzzle game."

Bejeweled was derived from a very simple web game someone at PopCap had seen but was very primitive. The developer took some influence from *Tetris Attack* too. "I guess in some ways it was fortunate timing in that it came out in 2000 at the same time a lot of people were getting on the internet for the first time. *Bejeweled* became a game that was available on the web for free that could be accessed by these casual gamer types."

But, he is keen to distance *Tetris* from *Bejeweled*. "*Tetris* has always been a very skill-based game. You have to know what you're doing and it's fairly high stress; whereas, *Bejeweled* – particularly in its earlier forms where it was mostly an untimed game – wasn't necessarily all that oriented towards skill. It was, in some ways, pretty luck based."

With *Peggle*, PopCap was cementing its reputation as a puzzle game developer and then, as the Noughties rolled on, more and more



» [iOS] Games like *Cut The Rope* prove that physics-based puzzles are well suited to the device.

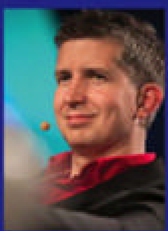


» [PC] *Bejeweled* is one of the earliest examples of the match three genre that is now so popular with casual gamers.



The Saga continues

Puzzle games are as popular now as ever thanks to smartphones and tablets. King.com's games guru Tommy Palm talks about its biggest success, Candy Crush Saga



Where did the concept for *Candy Crush Saga* originate?
Candy Crush was first made as a single level game for www.king.com in mid-2011. The idea was to make a slightly different 'match three' game with a candy theme. Candy is something most people have a positive association with and it creates a great base for visuals as it comes in so many colours and shapes.

What do you think it brought to the table?
We had made 'match three' games before and we knew our audience liked them but this was the first to have the extra bonuses and effects for matching together the powered up candies. That changed the dynamics of the gameplay quite a bit and brought something new and fresh to the genre.

How long did it take to create?
The first version of the game *Candy Crush* was made with just three people during a two-month period. Then a slightly bigger team worked on the Facebook version of the game for about six months until it was released in April 2012. That is when all the different levels, the map and your friends' progress came into the game and we added the Saga ending to it. The mobile version of the game was released in late November last year and from that point the audience really started to grow.

What's the most difficult thing about creating a puzzle game?
The type of casual social games that we focus on require that the core of the game can be understood really quickly and a new user can start having fun within seconds from starting playing. To find concepts that are really easy to start playing but also provide the different challenges to last for hundreds of levels is challenging. Our recipe for that is to keep the teams small and allow them to innovate and test concepts early on king.com before starting larger projects. That way we can remove some of the risk with the game development process.

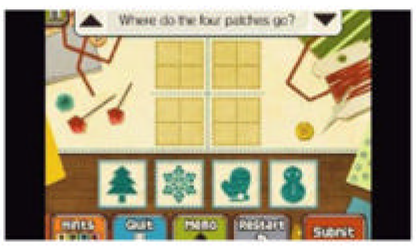
Have you been surprised by *Candy Crush*'s massive success?
We could see early on that *Candy Crush* was really popular with the 12 million players on king.com, so we had more than a feeling that *Candy Crush Saga* was going to be big. But the global phenomena that it has become – I do not think anyone could predict. It is extremely fun to see all the fan art and social interactions around the game.

Why do you think puzzle games are currently so popular with social media users?
The fact that some puzzles are so accessible and inclusive for people of all ages just makes it well suited to play in a social environment. We see clear differences in the people playing without connecting to their friends compared to the ones that do. The non-connected player plays much less. It is natural that it is more fun to play with your friends and family.

» [PC] *World Of Goo* is another fantastic puzzler that proves the genre remains alive and well on modern systems.



» [3DS] The *Professor Layton* series features all kinds of clever little puzzles and an enchanting narrative to boot. Very addictive.





» [iOS] *Angry Birds* remains insanely popular. This is the *Star Wars* version and we love it.

puzzle games began to emerge once more. *Lumines* was an excellent early PSP title, with Sony no doubt believing in the power of a puzzler to sell a system. *Brain Training* on the DS tried to take puzzles and make them feel as if you were learning something and becoming smarter as a result. "I believe books are the best," says Dr Ryuta Kawashima of the reason he tied in to the game. "But nowadays people do not want to read and prefer games to get information."

Puzzle Quest: Challenge Of The Warlords from 2007 was RPG in nature but on a puzzle grid where special attacks, for example, came into play when the gems were moved. The physics of *World Of Goo* needed you to bond cute blobs together to get a set number into a pipe at the end. "In *World Of Goo*, the goal is to create a similar sense of wonderment, where each level is visually iconic, each with a new puzzle and gameplay surprise, all somehow related to a slightly devious story arc," says *World Of Goo* co-creator Ron Carmel.

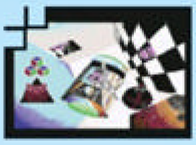
Smartphones and then tablets brought with them the likes of *Angry Birds* and *Cut The Rope*. Physics puzzles and more grid-based games are in vogue. Hidden-object games are popular too, while FaceBook and casual puzzle games go hand-in-hand.

Professor Layton games consist of lots of little puzzles, so it's no wonder that *Professor Layton And The Curious Village* is the best selling puzzle game on the Nintendo DS. Indeed, there have been lots of recent innovations. *Crush* was a cool 2D/3D hybrid puzzle game, while *Portal 2* took multiplayer puzzling to a new level. There has been an episodic puzzle game – *Blue Toad Murder Files* in 2009 – and one where you can type a word and see the object appear (*Super Scribblenauts* in 2010). Add to that indie gems *Limbo* and *Braid* ("The puzzles are not neutral since they tend to be very limited in how you can solve them," says Jonathan Blow) although some would not include these in a traditional definition of puzzle games.

Today, *Candy Crush Saga* is probably the most popular of all. The industry has turned full circle. Tommy Palm, King's games guru, sums up the approach to today's puzzlers. "The type of casual social games that we focus on requires that the core of the game can be understood really quickly," he says. But there is, it has to be said, less confusion over what makes a puzzle game today. You simply find them under that category in an app store. *Tetris* is still there.

DEACTI

Each era has its underrated classics. This game, from the time of the 8-bits, is one of them. Graeme Mason speaks to designers Chris Palmer and David Bishop on the devious robotic bomb-disposal game that slipped under almost everyone's radar, and the concept of the marketing company behind it: Tigress



IN THE KNOW

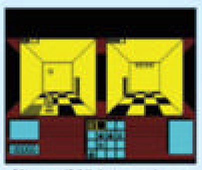
» **PUBLISHER:** REAKTOR (ARIOLASOFT)

» **DEVELOPER:** TIGRESS MARKETING (DESIGN) & SYSTEM SOFTWARE (PROGRAMMING)

» **RELEASED:** 1986

» **PLATFORM:** COMMODORE 64, ZX SPECTRUM, AMSTRAD CPC 464

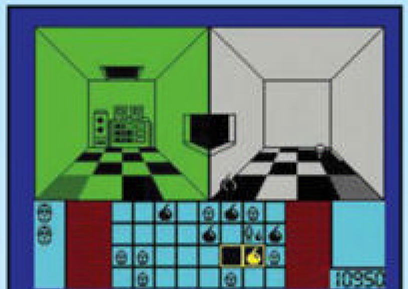
» **GENRE:** PUZZLE/ ARCADE ADVENTURE



» [Amstrad] All three versions were graphically similar.



» [Spectrum] Yet more gravitational hi-jinks.



» [Spectrum] Bombs could be thrown through holes in the walls and ceilings to a waiting deactivator.

How did Tigress Marketing come about?
CP: It was initially started by David Bishop and Beth Wooding. I knew David from my time at Argus Specialist Publications when we often discussed how games could be improved. We discovered we had a mutual love of gaming in its various forms, along with a shared frustration in the lack of fundamental game principles of the releases of the time. I quit Argus and went to join David and Beth.

What was the idea behind the company?
DB: At the time, the majority of games were being designed by the programmers themselves and were more driven by what could be achieved technically rather than what would make a good gaming experience. We decided that what was needed was to separate the design process from the programming, so set up a design studio to do just that.

How did the actual process between yourselves and the other companies involved work?
DB: In a sense we worked like an analogue of the screenwriter and director. For a lot of games we worked up the concept and storyboard and then pitched it to publishers. Once the games were taken up we would find a programming team and then liaise between them and the publishers to make sure the game came out as we envisaged. Sometimes it worked the other way round and publishers would approach us with concepts and properties they wanted turned into games.

Tell us about the genesis of *Deactivators*.
CP: David and I spent a lot of time brainstorming game ideas and *Deactivators* came out of one of these sessions. At its heart it was a puzzle game, in terms of working out the routes and sequence to remove all the bombs from the building.

How did you design the game?
CP: Everything was done by hand and on paper – lots and lots of paper! We created a stack of blank building templates and then would sit down and work out the tasks for each building and the routes and timings required.

How involved did you get in other aspects, such as the graphics?
DB: We came up with the overall look and feel for how we wanted the game screen to be displayed and then we would finesse the designs with the development teams in terms of practicality on each system.

The three versions look and play very similarly though…
DB: With *Deactivators*, the differences are minimal. For instance, we had problems with the teleports between the C64 and Spectrum versions. If you compare them you'll see the sprite handling was better on the C64 so we could have an animation for the teleport squares. On the Spectrum version we had to settle for just changing the texture of the square as the animation wouldn't work without disrupting the other elements.

Did you ever get involved with the actual programming process?
CP: We never cut code ourselves as it was important to the whole idea of Tigress that we remained focused on the game and gameplay.

But you must have kept closely in touch with the programming team?
CP: Of course, we would regularly spend



VATORS

time at their studios, testing gameplay elements and sometimes refining the design to help work around the limitations of the hardware.

How long did it take from design to release?
CP: We think the design process took around a month and the development probably four to five months. They [System Software] did a great job of realising the designs and specs we gave them.

As we mentioned earlier, all the versions look very similar…
CP: As with most of the games we did, all three versions were developed alongside each other.

One of the very few criticisms of *Deactivators* was its difficulty level. Would you agree?
CP: Reflecting on the game today, we do think we hit the players with too much too soon. The game would have benefitted from a more gentle learning curve of some of the trickier gameplay elements. In level one the player already had to cope with robot guards, level two you're thrown a couple of reverse-gravity rooms and by level three you're tackling all that and blacked out rooms!

We're sure it could have been much worse though.
CP: Most certainly – one of the initial ideas was that when throwing a bomb between rooms you had to position the receiving robot correctly to catch it or the bomb would explode when it hit the floor or a wall. Thankfully we decided to drop that one…

***Deactivators* was well reviewed but not a great seller. Elation and deflation?**
CP: From a commercial standpoint it was disappointment, as we wanted publishers to see a good return on what was a new concept for them. With *Deactivators*, however, we did feel there was a disconnect between what the game was actually about and how it was marketed. At heart it was a puzzle game, but it looked more like an arcade game and the advertising overplayed the arcade elements and underplayed the strategic ones. With the reviews, we were glad that, on the whole, reviewers recognised that the game was challenging and an original concept – which is what we set out to achieve. We always strived to do something different and were never interested in doing 'me too' games.

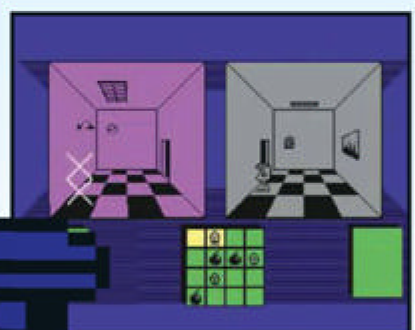
In what way do you look back on *Deactivators* today?
DB: We're very proud of it, and the majority of our games. Seen in the context of a lot of other games from the time, we felt we were always producing titles that were original and were in keeping with our original designs.

Tigress disappeared shortly after the release of *Deactivators*. What happened?
DB: We got into a situation where the majority of our output was being published by Ariolasoft, and its parent company, BMG, decided to pull out of software publishing. As we didn't have enough work to keep us going while we developed relationships with other publishers, sadly the games side of Tigress ended there.

How would you reflect on your time with Tigress?
CP: I think we were probably two or three years ahead of our time in what we were trying to do – certainly in the UK there weren't any companies that were focusing purely on game design. It's nice to see that, as the game industry has developed and matured, some of the principles we had at our heart have become the norm.



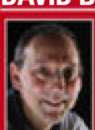
» [Spectrum] The first level and three bombs to be deactivated. Best get to it.



» [C64] Is it just us, or does the Commodore 64 version look that little bit drabber?

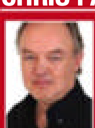
WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

DAVID BISHOP

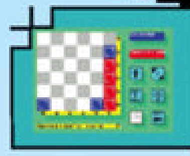


■ David has enjoyed a fruitful career in games design and production. After Tigress he worked for Virgin Interactive, Mindscape and Sky (as head of its interactive games division, Sky Games). Following a spell as senior game designer at Popcap, he now continues to produce entertaining software at the home of *Moshi Monsters*, Mind Candy.

CHRIS PALMER



■ In his post Tigress days, Chris moved from videogame development into the IT industry. Today he works for CM Designs, a web and IT solutions firm.



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

THINK!
(PICTURED)
SYSTEM: ZX SPECTRUM, COMMODORE 64, AMSTRAD CPC
YEAR: 1985

THEY STOLE A MILLION
SYSTEM: ZX SPECTRUM, COMMODORE 64, AMSTRAD CPC
YEAR: 1986





TOP 25 SNES GAMES

retro GAMER READERS' CHOICE

The results are in, but did your favourite SNES games make the cut? Find out in the coming pages…





SimCity

- **DEVELOPER:** NINTENDO EAD
- **YEAR:** 1991 **GENRE:** STRATEGY

25 **It may be** primarily remembered as a PC franchise but, with numerous changes and additions to this console port, it's little wonder so many of you cited it as a SNES favourite. Developed by Nintendo EAD rather than Maxis, this version has a distinct Japanese flavour and several beautiful Nintendo twists – seeing Bowser stomp through the city is up there with the greatest gaming moments. The team did a great job of making it work with a controller rather than a mouse, too.

ActRaiser

- **DEVELOPER:** QUINTET
- **YEAR:** 1990 **GENRE:** STRATEGY/ACTION

24 **The beauty of** ***ActRaiser*** is that it is effectively two games in one. Half god game – albeit without any direct religious references, thanks to Nintendo's hard-line self-censorship of the time – half action game, all awesome. While it's true that neither part is a dedicated example of the genres in question, it's the unique fusion that makes this so memorable. Putting town creation and management on hold to go kick some ass is something that no other game can offer.





Cybernator

- **DEVELOPER:** NCS CORP
- **YEAR:** 1992 **GENRE:** SHOOT-'EM-UP

23 **A surprisingly strong** showing in support of this shooter sees it make the list ahead of bona fide classics like *Super Punch-Out!*, but you've gotta love the underdog. It's an inventive mech shooter that really makes you feel like you're in control of a huge, complex piece of kit and it still holds up brilliantly today. The same can't be said of the budget PlayStation 2 remake, sadly – our advice would be to just stick with the original…







Zombies Ate My Neighbours

DEVELOPER: LUCASARTS
YEAR: 1993 GENRE: RUN-AND-GUN

22 **There's a lot** to be said for this B-movie shooter, so we're not overly surprised to see you come out in numbers to support it. The recent sad loss of LucasArts might have done something to bolster its following, but it's certainly not ill-deserved – the humour, style and tight gameplay are such that many modern developers would kill to put their name to something as polished and refined as this.

Perhaps the original great co-op game, *Zombies Ate My Neighbours* lets protagonists Zeke and Julie use anything they can find to hold off the zombie apocalypse and secure the safety of the guys and gals that live down the street. But it's not just zombies – variety here is exceptional and, over the course of the game, you'll find yourself gunning down pretty much every B-movie cliché – from giant ants to vampires and aliens. But it doesn't stop there, as the level with the gigantic rampaging baby perfectly displays. It keeps you guessing by constantly changing things up – even though gameplay changes little, that each stage can feel entirely unique is amazing.

Said variety extends beyond simply switching enemy sprites out for new ones, too. It's the weapons, an improvised arsenal comprising of everything from water pistols to rocket launchers. It's the settings, myriad slices of suburbia pulled straight out of every low-budget horror movie ever made. And it's the characters – even the titular neighbours come in all shapes and forms, with each of them worth a different amount of points if you can save them in time. Thankfully, you don't need to rescue them all but, the more you manage to free, the better your score will be. And just like most games in this genre, that's all that really matters.



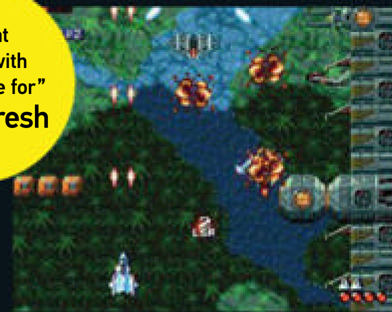


Donkey Kong Country 2: Diddy's Kong Quest

DEVELOPER: RARE
YEAR: 1995 GENRE: PLATFORMER

21 **If you could** all have just pulled together and decided amongst yourselves which *Donkey Kong Country* game was best, it could quite easily have made the top five. Instead, divided opinion gives us two *Kong* games in this list, Rare's platform sequel just missing out on the top 20. Quite how DK came to be kidnapped in the first place is a conversation for another time, though it's clear that Diddy and Dixie can handle themselves well enough without him. It was around this point that Rare's love affair with collectibles began, so those that have enjoyed cleaning up and finding everything in the likes of *Banjo-Kazooie* and *Star Fox Adventures* would do well to recognise where it all started.

"A great shooter with music to die for"
gmintyfresh



Super Aleste

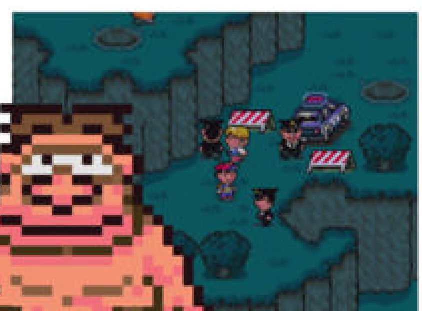
DEVELOPER: COMPILE
YEAR: 1992 GENRE: SHOOT-'EM-UP

20 **An excellent shooter,** as evidenced by the fact that it managed to beat the likes of *Super R-Type*, *Gradius III* and *UN Squadron*. A rich and varied arsenal is what really makes *Super Aleste* stand out, each of the eight weapons offering six different levels of power. Furthermore, each can be modified at the touch of a button, adding reverse fire (or similar area coverage) or changing properties to give options that can more or less cover every situation the game throws at you. Like pretty much every shooter, there's a problem in that death causes you to respawn with virtually no firepower – but there's a simple solution to that problem: just be better at the game. Solved.

EarthBound

DEVELOPER: APE/HAL LABORATORY
YEAR: 1994 GENRE: RPG

19 **It may not** have had a UK release, but that seems to have had little impact on the popularity of this glorious RPG. Perhaps offered a little more exposure thanks to Ness's appearance in *Super Smash Bros*, this quirky little title can take pride of place in any collection – mint originals now change hands for upwards of 500 quid. Why? It's one of the few retro classics not to have seen a re-release in any form, despite constant calls for it to come to Virtual Console. Still, all that is set to change now, as the cult RPG has finally been released on Nintendo's digital service. Let's see if that does anything to the insane price that original copies currently go for…





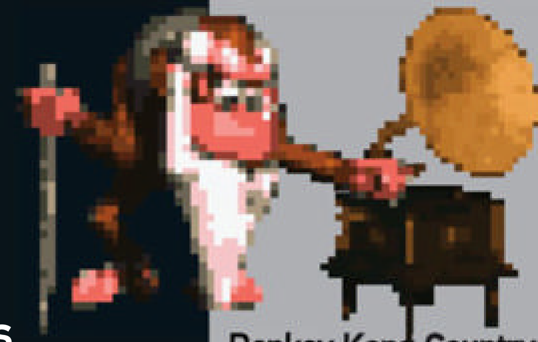


Super Mario All-Stars

DEVELOPER: NINTENDO EAD

YEAR RELEASED: 1993 **GENRE:** PLATFORMER

18 **A compilation and** console bundle title it may be, but far be it from that to exclude this collection of timeless games from your list. Sporting enhanced versions of the three NES *Mario* titles as well as super-tough variant *The Lost Levels* – famously *Super Mario Bros 2* in Japan, while we received a massively modified version of *Doki Doki Panic* – this is pretty much platforming heaven. Any one of the collected games would be worthy of a spot on this list alone, so the combination of all four is pretty much a shoo-in. You could buy a console and get by for months just on the single bundled game, which is not something that can be said of any console since. Later versions also included *Super Mario World*, which you can safely expect to read more about in the coming pages. Just a guess.



Super Tennis

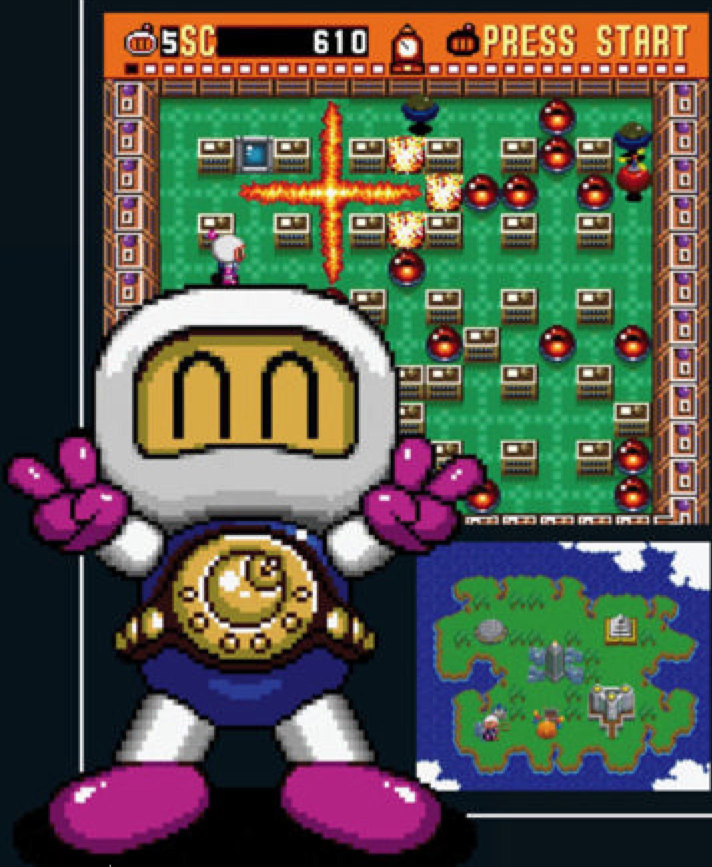
DEVELOPER: TOKYO SHOSEKI

YEAR RELEASED: 1991 **GENRE:** SPORTS

17 **Early titles are** always going to live large in the hearts of fans – they're the ones that get the most play while you're waiting for the next big game, after all. We can all but assume that's why this 1991 title earned a spot on this list, although we'd struggle to point to an earlier multiplayer sports game that we got so much enjoyment out of. Making tennis quick and fun was a masterstroke, though even the points that dragged on proved to be hugely enjoyable – that's why we saw the same arcade template applied to *Smash Court Tennis* and, later, *Virtua Tennis*. We're all for simulation but, when it comes to a quick sporting thrill, we'd struggle to name many better games than this beauty. It sure as hell beats leaping around the lounge with a remote in your hand, that's for sure.



"I loved this game so much. Good single player, fantastic multiplayer and the best sports game for me"
Nemesis



Super Bomberman

DEVELOPER: HUDSON SOFT

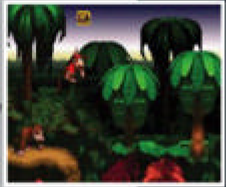
YEAR RELEASED: 1993 **GENRE:** ACTION

16 **Again, *Bomberman* would** be higher on this list if it weren't for the fact that gamers had no less than five different kinds of *Super* to consider in this case. Ignoring the fact that the console had just two controller ports, Konami elected to use an adorable multi-tap to allow for showdowns on a scale never before seen on console. Later games introduced more elements tailored to accommodate multiplayer massacres and, to be frank, we'd probably rather have seen one of these make the list than the simple original. However, there's a lot to be said for getting there first, and for all of you who voted for any of the superb sequels you can at least find solace in the fact that the little bobble-headed murderer managed to get onto the list at all. And we're glad he did – there are few better tests of pure gaming skill than a *Bomberman* face-off. Quite how this franchise wound up entertaining kart racers and sports games we'll never know – it remains one of the best and purest multiplayer experiences in the entirety of gaming.

Donkey Kong Country

DEVELOPER: RARE

YEAR: 1994 **GENRE:** PLATFORMER

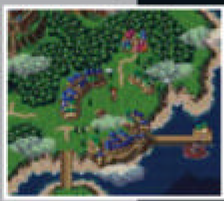


15 **Poor old Retro.** As much as it tried its best to recapture the magic of the originals, in essence it's just not the same – the music, the design and the well judged level of difficulty were all nailed the first time around. A stunning effort by Rare.

Chrono Trigger

DEVELOPER: SQUARE

YEAR: 1995 **GENRE:** RPG

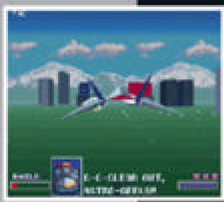


14 **As if this** time-hopping RPG classic wasn't going to make this list. *As if.* Any game that stars a noble frog warrior is one that we fully support, so we'll take any excuse we can get to celebrate this wonderful action-RPG from Square's archives.

Star Fox

DEVELOPER: NINTENDO EAD/ARGONAUT SOFTWARE **YEAR:** 1993

GENRE: SHOOT-'EM-UP

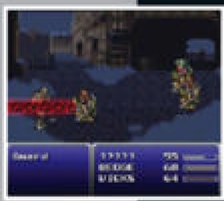


13 **This is more** than deserving of recognition for its introduction of useless gaming baggage Slippy Toad alone. It's just a shame that its pioneering 3D visuals will forever take a back seat due to the 'do a barrel roll' meme it spawned.

Final Fantasy VI

DEVELOPER: SQUARE

YEAR: 1994 **GENRE:** RPG

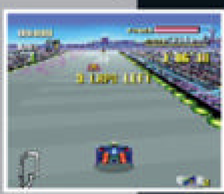


12 **Picking just one** of Square's 16-bit *Final Fantasy* games is a near-impossible choice, so well done for settling on this one. Echoes of *FFVI* can be felt in every canon game since, and its Uematsu soundtrack is enough to secure it a place on this rundown alone.

F-Zero

DEVELOPER: NINTENDO EAD

YEAR: 1990 **GENRE:** RACING



11 **Racing games are** boring? Yeah, nice try. A futuristic setting and amazing 3D visuals made this an unforgettable experience for everyone who played it, though it's saddening that we haven't seen a new version since the exceptional *GX* on GameCube.



"The only one in the series you need to play – best ever linear version of the game before it tried to copy *Metroid*"
davyK



Super Castlevania IV

■ **DEVELOPER:** KONAMI
■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1991 ■ **GENRE:** PLATFORMER

10 **Ask most people** which is their favourite *Castlevania* and, more often than not, you'll hear *Symphony Of The Night*. While the PlayStation game is a spectacular display of genre-straddling RPG action, there's a hardcore arcade purity to *Super Castlevania IV* that gives it the edge. The music, the bosses, the sheer variety… this is the stuff of legend and its reverence is far from ill-deserved. Action-platforming with a gothic slant, you could walk for miles and not find anyone who has gotten past the second level – *Dark Souls* and its ilk may claim to have created the hardcore sector, but we know better. *Castlevania* was there first. And if you can claim to have finished this, that's something that counts for a lot on your gaming CV – arcade coin-munchers have nothing on this beast.

Secret Of Mana

■ **DEVELOPER:** SQUARE
■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1993 ■ **GENRE:** ACTION-RPG

9 **There had to** be at least one Square RPG in the top ten and, with so many failing to get European releases, it stands to reason that this should be the one to make the cut. Three-player co-op was a unique selling point but, even without that, *Secret Of Mana* would still hold up brilliantly. This action-RPG managed to tick every box, from a unique leveling system to a great cast of characters that could be tailored to your own whim. Despite several sequels, this remains the best game in the series – the PlayStation sequel has its fans, but their numbers are feeble compared to those who would back the original. To this day, we've yet to see a truly great *Mana* follow-up and, while it's unlikely that we'll see one in this play-safe environment, it'd be a retro insta-win if Square announced a new *Mana* game tomorrow.



Pilotwings

■ **DEVELOPER:** NINTENDO EAD
■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1990 ■ **GENRE:** FLIGHT SIMULATION

8 **Tech demos seem** to be the order of the day lately, with the likes of Wii Sports and Kinect Adventures capturing the imaginations of millions. But this beat all of them to the punch, a showcase for the unknown power of the SNES and an early glimpse at the magic of 3D. Few could have imagined that a flight game would be the one to show off what the SNES was truly capable of, but that's precisely what *Pilotwings* did. Three-dimensional gaming wouldn't become the norm until years later, but we can't forget who planted that seed – few did it better either, to be fair. In terms of offering a unique experience, few titles can rub shoulders with *Pilotwings*. Even the N64 and 3DS updates never really managed to recapture the magic of the original, fun as they may be.

Contra III: The Alien Wars

■ **DEVELOPER:** KONAMI
■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1992 ■ **GENRE:** RUN-AND-GUN

7 **Anyone that throws** their hardcore weight around based on recent accomplishments like finishing *Dark Souls* or *Super Meat Boy* would do well to pop back in time and give this monster a go. Whatever you choose to call it, this is pretty much the epitome of hardcore – dudes be coming from everywhere, and all of them will kill you in a single hit. *Contra* had lost its way recently until *Hard Corps* brought it back – it's rare that a sequel nails exactly what was so good about the original but that's what Arc managed to do. The original still presents an awesome challenge and one that anyone can be proud to have conquered. Pretty much the ultimate run-and-gun game, *Contra III* exists to kick the ass of anyone who tries to play it. As you probably know. If not, give it a shot today and don't even vaguely expect to win.





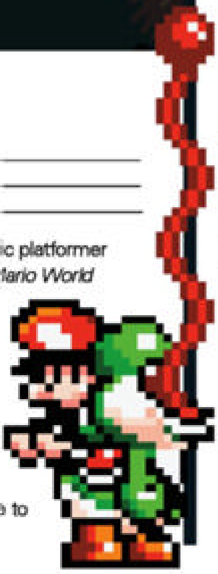
"Absolutely stonking side-scrolling shooter, the game that my staunchly MD owning mate bought a SNES for"
adippm82



Super Mario World 2: Yoshi's Island

DEVELOPER: NINTENDO EAD
YEAR RELEASED: 1995 **GENRE:** PLATFORMER

6 **We have to** be honest – we thought this classic platformer would come in a little higher. But with *Super Mario World* stealing the majority of the vote, we guess it was a 'one or the other' mindset in most cases. Either way, this dino-themed sequel performed admirably and, while we wouldn't want to have to make a pitch as to which was the better game, the egg-tossing love this game has received pretty much does that for us. Platform games don't come much better than this, especially when they don't involve the bugs or bandicoots that have come to define the genre.



Super Metroid

DEVELOPER: NINTENDO R&D1/INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS
YEAR RELEASED: 1994 **GENRE:** ACTION/ADVENTURE



5 **Few games have** laid out their stalls quite so well as this. *Super Metroid* basically doesn't say a word, but it doesn't need to. If anything, that's the joy of it – the mystery is what keeps you playing and, even when you know what you're doing, this is not an easy world to explore. Setting the template for an entire sub-genre, this can happily claim to be one of the most influential games ever made. The recent Virtual Console Wii U re-release has given us such greats as 'Y can't Metroid crawl', cementing it as one of the great work-it-out-as-you-go-along games out there…

Super Mario Kart

DEVELOPER: NINTENDO EAD
YEAR RELEASED: 1992 **GENRE:** RACER



4 **Another obvious choice,** although it'd take a real Blue Shell enthusiast (there's no such thing) to claim that *Mario Kart* was a fair way to settle disputes. Still, few would argue that this wasn't one of the great multiplayer games of our time, especially in the age before the game-breaking Blue Shell came into play. Multiplayer rivalries can still be settled with this tried and tested method, although many cite more recent games – *Double Dash*, *MK7* and even the Wii version – as the best. There's no right answer… well, okay, there is. And it's not *Mario Kart 64*.

Street Fighter II Turbo

DEVELOPER: CAPCOM
YEAR RELEASED: 1992 **GENRE:** BEAT-'EM-UP

3 **If you owned** a SNES and had a second controller, chances are you doubled up for the opportunity to show your mates what a Dragon Punch or a Flash Kick was. *Street Fighter* was *the* go-to competitive game at the time and, while we've since learned to play on stick, that wasn't really an option back then. Capcom did an incredible job of bringing the arcade experience home – there are few better coin-op conversions than this one and it was this kind of perfect port that made your friends with a Mega Drive incredibly jealous.



The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past



DEVELOPER: NINTENDO EAD
YEAR RELEASED: 1991 **GENRE:** ACTION-RPG

2 **Arguments will rage** until the end of time as to which of Link's adventures is the best (ironically, it's *definitely* not *Link's Adventure*) but it's this seminal title and *Ocarina Of Time* that most often find themselves tussling for the top spot. While the 3D debut was unquestionably a masterpiece, it likely wouldn't have existed at all had it not been for this beautiful and surprisingly open RPG – it might have offered slightly more direction than the NES original but it still managed to feel like you were lost in a strange world with only your wits (well, those and whatever tools you could loot from dungeons) to rely on. The reveal of the Dark World ranks up there with the best gaming surprises of all time. Eat your heart out, Kojima…



> "I remember staying up all night at a friend's house playing it and taking forever to figure out that you needed to light a lamp to open up a door"
> **Soulstar**



Super Mario World

■ **DEVELOPER:** NINTENDO EAD ■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1990 ■ **GENRE:** PLATFORMER

1 Nintendo's mascot was always going to be a clear favourite to claim the top spot on this list, but the landslide took even those of us expecting a moustachioed number one by surprise. Mario didn't just walk this list – he grabbed a Cape Feather and flew over the top of the whole damn thing.

With *Super Mario World* appearing as a pack-in with many console bundles, this would have been the first experience of 16-bit gaming for many people. And what a way to start – it'd be like your first taste of meat being a huge T-bone steak, or your first car after passing your test being a Ferrari. This is seen by many as being as close as we've come to platforming perfection and, truth be told, we're in no position to argue. We still play *Super Mario World* regularly to this day and we're *still* discovering new tricks and secrets hidden away in the many, many stages.

There's so much to talk about in celebration of *Super Mario World* that it's difficult to know where to begin. But, we'll start as is logical – with pretty much the first thing you see when starting up the game. The map structure isn't entirely new, with *Super Mario Bros 3* pulling much the same stunt albeit broken down by level. But, it's the improved sense of scale that comes from having one big map that really makes this feel like an epic journey, and one where the route – and even the destination – aren't always clear. Find a hidden exit to a stage and you can find yourself branching out into areas far more difficult than you're used to. But, with so many routes on offer, there's no shame in returning to the beaten path in order to hurry along your journey to Bowser's castle.

Then, there's the way that each of the power-ups changes how you approach and traverse each stage. A cape will let you soar up to hidden cloud platforms if you can get the speed up to get lift in the first place, while a fire flower lets you muscle your way past many obstacles. There are even a few situational pickups (such as the one that turns Mario into a balloon) to use and abuse, though it's definitely the trusty mushroom that will see the most use. You can even keep one of these back in reserve – useful if you know you'll need it later in a tricky level and don't want to risk losing it along the way.

Whether or not there's such a thing as a perfect game is an argument that will never be won. Whether or not *Super Mario World* is the closest thing we've seen to one, though? That's not even up for debate.



What Makes It So Super

Hidden Exits

If you've got the right power-up and an explorer's spirit, there are loads of secret ways to end levels prematurely. Doing so can open up new paths that let you speed across the world map, as Star Road fans will know

Dino Might

Yoshi eggs are hidden away in many of the blocks scattered around *Mario World*, and unleashing the beast is always a joy. Not only does he offer you an extra hit, there are also certain areas that you simply can't reach without him

Perfect Design

Variety counts for a lot, though it's the fact that there's no weak link that proves the most amazing. Whether swimming, soaring, riding or climbing, *Super Mario World* never so much as misses a beat

Star Power

Soaring above the world is Star Road, a set of super-tough stages with secret exits on every one. If you know where to find the lot, you can finish the entire game in less than ten minutes

Endless Replayability

So many exits, so many routes, so many tiny little secrets to find… there's just so much to this game that, as we said, we're still finding new power-ups and hidden areas to this day. As close to the perfect platformer as you can get, basically

"Boundless creativity and invention, pixel perfect level design, fiendish puzzles and power-ups that changed the dynamic of play"
Wools

POWER-UP: THE SPECTRUM 128K



Sir Clive Sinclair claimed that the Spectrum 128K would deliver games "quite unlike anything seen before". Just how ridiculous was that statement? Martyn Carroll looks at the enhanced hardware and its games to find out



» [Spectrum] Sinclair neglected to mention that *Little Computer People* had taken up residence inside 128s.



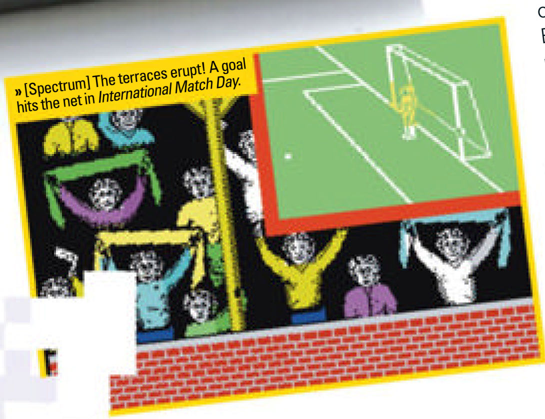
When the ZX Spectrum launched to a fanfare in 1982, one of the features which impressed the critics the most was the generous amount of onboard memory. There was an ample 16K of RAM as standard, with the more expensive model boasting a positively prodigious 48K. It was quite some leap when you consider that Sinclair's ZX80 and ZX81 computers came with a paltry 1K of RAM.

Yet game developers wasted little time in filling the available memory with graphics and code. The first casualty was games for the 16K model. The Spectrum's video display occupied roughly 7K, leaving just 9K for programs on the basic machine. Companies such as Bug-Byte, Imagine, Quicksilva and Ultimate produced many 16K games in the early years – it obviously made commercial sense to ensure that their wares could be enjoyed by all Spectrum owners. But, when it became clear that dedicated 48K games were selling in large numbers, 16K releases slowed to a trickle and dried up altogether by around 1984. In most cases, 48K meant more screens, more graphics, more challenge, more game.

The shift to 48K led to that golden period in the mid-Eighties when dozens of definitive titles were released for the Spectrum. There's no need to list them – you know them, you've played them. 48K of RAM was clearly a good fit, yet there were soon signs that it might not be enough. Multi-part adventure games started to appear and Mikro-Gen famously released its Mikro-Plus interface, which allowed for games up to 64K in size.

The Mikro-Plus was a notable failure, but maybe additional hardware could help deliver bigger and better games. Sinclair's Microdrive system was introduced as a storage solution that was preferable to tape, leading some of those in the press to suggest that game developers could make use of the new format. Each Microdrive cartridge could store around 85K – enough room to fill the Spectrum's useable memory twice over. As you progressed through a game, additional game data could be quickly dragged from the cart. Third-party floppy drives such as the Opus Discovery and the DISCiPLE could be employed in the same way.

As it happened, commercial game releases on anything other than cassette tape were



» [Spectrum] The terraces erupt! A goal hits the net in *International Match Day*.



few and far between. Punters were generally happy to stick with their bog-standard Spectrums and patiently load programs from tape. Something that held more sway was a brand new Spectrum, an enhanced model that packed new features including an extra 80K of lovely RAM.

The Spectrum 128K was the first computer that Sinclair actively positioned as a games machine. At the machine's UK launch in February 1986, Sinclair's chief executive Bill Jeffery said: "We have focused the 128 on the entertainment sector. Recent market research has shown us that entertainment is easily the most common use of computers in the home."

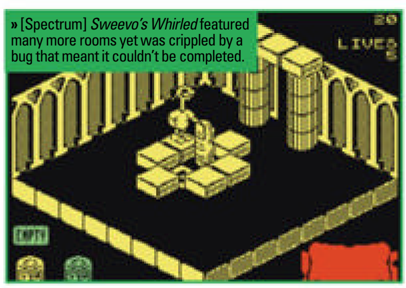
It goes without saying that the 128 wasn't the machine that the company particularly wanted to put out. While stories that Sir Clive Sinclair couldn't abide silly little games are nonsense, it's no secret that he was more interested in the professional application of computers. But, the commercial failure of the Sinclair QL business machine prompted the firm to look back at its greatest triumph, the Spectrum, and try and rekindle some of that success. Therefore, the 128 was designed purely as an upgrade aimed at gamers. In this regard, the two chief additions were a three-channel AY audio chip to make games sound better and more memory because, well, you can never have enough of that stuff. To ensure compatibility with existing Spectrum software, the idiosyncratic video display was left untouched. One odd omission was the lack of built-in joystick ports, particularly as the Sinclair joystick standard introduced with the Interface 2 add-on had already been widely adopted by developers. It seemed that you could always count on Sinclair to make at least one baffling design decision.

So the platform was in place, but what about the software? At the launch, Sinclair issued a catalogue listing all the new 128K games in development. It was a healthy selection, with more than 60 titles from most of the main publishers – Ocean, US Gold, Activision, Domark, Melbourne House, Mirrorsoft, Telecomsoft, Software Projects and more. But there was a problem. Nearly all of the games listed were already available for the 48K Spectrum. To find out what was happening you only had to look at the two titles bundled with the 128 – *Daley Thompson's Super-Test* and *The NeverEnding Story*, both from Ocean and both updates of existing titles.

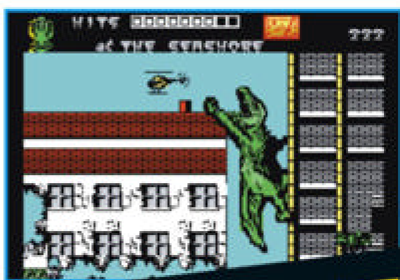
The original 48K *Super-Test* featured eight separate events that loaded in two blocks, while the 128K version added four new events and the whole game loaded in one go. There



» [Spectrum] The 128K version of *The NeverEnding Story* featured a single load and the theme tune over the 48K outing. It's otherwise the same.



» [Spectrum] *Sweevo's Whirled* featured many more rooms yet was crippled by a bug that meant it couldn't be completed.



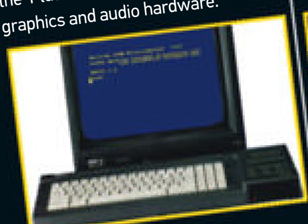
» [Spectrum] Mega dinosaur sprite ahoy in *The Muncher*, a bash-'em-up saddled with the Chewits sweet license prior to release.

MODEL BEHAVIOUR

POPULAR COMPUTER SYSTEMS THAT HAVE BEEN UPGRADED OVER THE YEARS

AMSTRAD CPC

■ The CPC received several upgrades during its lifetime. Chief among these was the 6128 model, featuring a built-in disk drive and 128K of RAM. Similar to the Spectrum, a lot of late-era software was developed to make use of the extra memory. In 1990, the 'Plus' range introduced upgraded graphics and audio hardware.



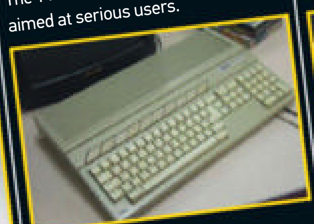
BBC MICRO

■ The original Model B had 32K of RAM which was expanded in 1985 with the launch of the B+ (either 64K or 128K) and again the following year with the BBC Master (128K minimum). Production of the Master continued until 1993, years after the introduction of Acorn's 32-bit Archimedes range.



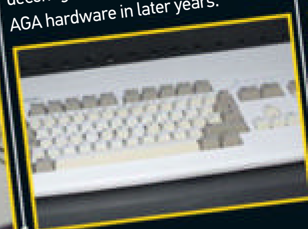
ATARI ST

■ The ST line was forever in flux, with new models regularly released. 1989's STE model was a notable update, featuring a wider colour palette and a blitter co-processor. This was good for gaming, and a few STE-enhanced games were released. The TT and Falcon models followed, aimed at serious users.



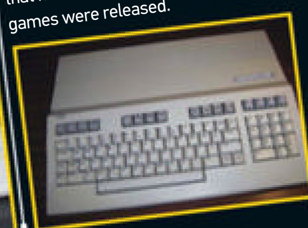
COMMODORE AMIGA

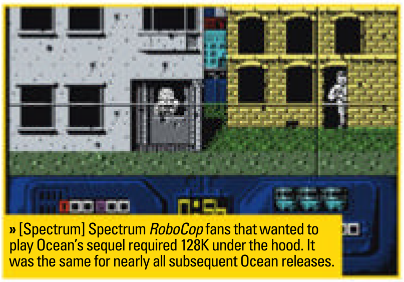
■ There were two updates of the original Amiga chipset: ECS in 1990 and AGA in 1992. The former offered little benefit to gamers, but the latter, which powered the Amiga 4000 and 1200 models, enhanced the visual capabilities of the computer. Some decent games were developed for the AGA hardware in later years.



COMMODORE 64

■ Launched in 1985, the Commodore 128 was positioned as an ideal upgrade for C64 owners, offering more memory, a faster processor, and other innovations. It also retained compatibility with existing C64 software, although this ensured that hardly any dedicated C128 games were released.





» [Spectrum] Spectrum *RoboCop* fans that wanted to play Ocean's sequel required 128K under the hood. It was the same for nearly all subsequent Ocean releases.

was some nice AY music added too, including a version of the *Chariots Of Fire* theme playing over the main menu. *The NeverEnding Story*, meanwhile, loaded in three parts on the 48K. The updated game was a single load and added an AY version of the movie's theme song that looped continually as you played. Ocean claimed that the 128K version featured 'enhanced gameplay', but the actual game was the same with no new content added.

It was the same story with the ten or so 128K titles available at launch. All of them were back catalogue titles with added AY audio as a minimum (with Odin's updates of *Nodes Of Yesod* and *Robin Of The Wood*, new sound was *all* you got). Most of them did beef up the size of the game: *Three Weeks In Paradise* added six new screens to explore while *Sweevo's Whirled* (an update of *Sweevo's World*) added 60. A couple of titles – *Technician Ted* and *Gladiator* – actually tweaked the gameplay for the better. But, it was clear that most publishers were happy to test the water by dipping in a toe.

Thankfully, there was one software house which made a decent splash. Mastertronic was not averse to taking the odd risk, mainly due to its budget price points, and forged ahead with the first game specifically developed for the Spectrum 128. *Knight Tyme*, the third in the *Magic Knight* series of arcade adventure games, provided the perfect example of 'how it should be done'. Developer David Jones crammed the 128's memory full of screens, characters and puzzles – and only by severely cutting away at the content was he able to issue the subsequent 48K version. And the cost? Just £2.99, like the other games in Mastertronic's MAD range.

The always excellent Chris Bourne of *Sinclair User* concluded his *Knight Tyme* preview with the following sharp remarks: "Perhaps other companies may learn a lesson from Mastertronic and follow suit – because if the new machine succeeds as it deserves to, it's going to need a lot more than Spinoff Raiders Pt IV (128 version) stamped on the cassette inserts to convince people. Well done Mastertronic. Who's next?"

128 owners were asking the very same question and, unfortunately, they'd have to wait a while for an answer.

The 128 had only been on sale in the UK for a few short months when it was announced that Amstrad had bought out the Sinclair computer business. Following the acquisition in April 1986, Amstrad announced that it would phase out the 128 and replace it with a new 'Plus 2' model later in the year.

In the meantime, enhanced 128K versions of existing 48K titles continued to appear. They included: *Rasputin* (featuring more screens, in-game music); *International Match Day* (new European Cup competition, goal celebration animation); *Ghostbusters* (new 'bouncing ball' intro with AY movie theme); *Fairlight* (new monsters, in-game music) and *Tau Ceti* (larger playing area, additional supporting data). All worthwhile purchases – providing that you didn't already own the original versions. ▶

> **"The Spectrum 128 was the first computer that Sinclair actively positioned as a games machine"**





DAVID JONES

THE MAN BEHIND THE MAGIC KNIGHT SERIES AND THE FIRST DEVELOPER TO CREATE AN EXCLUSIVE 128K GAME WITH KNIGHT TYME

You clearly developed *Knight Tyme* with the Spectrum 128 in mind. What led you to take this ambitious approach?

Mastertronic obtained a pre-release Spectrum 128 and a technical manual and they passed them on to me. I don't remember asking for one so it must have been their idea. As I hadn't finished *Knight Tyme* when I got the new Spectrum I decided to make use of the extra memory. I mostly used the extra space for graphics so that I didn't have to worry about how big my code was getting.

A cut-down 48K version of *Knight Tyme* followed. Did Mastertronic ask for this?

I can't remember if they actually asked for it, but I knew that if I didn't do a 48K version I'd irritate people and I'd also earn less because it would take a while for the 128-installed base to grow. But I also knew that I could make a better 48K game by writing for the 128 first. It had some reasonable data compression that I added as I worked to fit the game into 48K. I also went back and added some secret rooms to *Spellbound* when I upgraded that game to 128K. It seemed to me that just adding sound would be a bit of a cheat and that people who bought a 128 would want to know they got more game.

What was the main benefit of developing games for the Spectrum 128?

At the start I enjoyed the fact that I had a new piece of equipment that was not officially announced and that I'd have a launch title for it. But the main ongoing benefit once it was launched was fewer constraints when initially developing a title and finally having a reasonable sound chip.

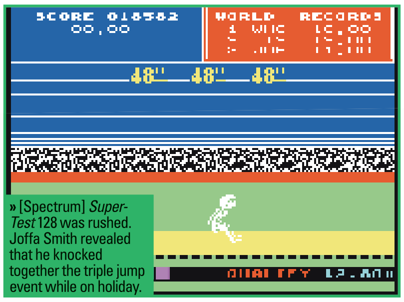


» [Spectrum] *Knight Tyme* provided players with a mini solar system to explore – once you'd figured out how to take command of the ship.

Moving forward, the 128K rehashes dried up and new games started to appear in duel 48/128K format. One of the first such releases was the Level 9 adventure *The Price Of Magik*, which had the basic 48K version on one side of the tape and an enhanced 128K version with location graphics and more detailed text descriptions on the other. Other titles that did a similar thing included *Starglider*, *Renegade*, *Tai-Pan* and *Stunt Car Racer*.

An alternative approach was to implement a loader which detected the amount of available RAM and then loaded in extra data if 128K was found. An early example was CRL's *Glider Rider*, where David Whittaker's amazing AY soundtrack loaded in after the game data on the 128. This became the norm in later years.

The Amstrad-manufactured Spectrum Plus 2 launched in September 1986. It was essentially



» [Spectrum] *Super-Test* 128 was rushed. Joffa Smith revealed that he knocked together the triple jump event while on holiday.

> **"Publishers played it safe, ensuring that their games were 48K compatible"**

a 128 with a proper keyboard, integrated tape drive and twin joystick ports – all common sense additions. And it was a success, with more than 300,000 Plus 2s sold in the first six months. Yet these numbers were still small compared to the millions of 48K machines still out there. Publishers accordingly played it safe, ensuring that their games were 48K compatible even if it meant poor (or nonexistent) sound and painful multi-loads.



» [Spectrum] *The Pawn* on 128. No graphics, but lots of witty descriptions and devious puzzles.

There were some exceptions. The Spectrum version of *Little Computer People* was a 128K-only affair when released in early 1987. This was a smart move by Activision, as this unique sim would have suffered if squeezed into 48K. As it was, the only thing the player had to suffer was the 13-minute load time. Magnetic Scroll's classic adventure *The Pawn* was also 128K-only – and that was just text without any location graphics.

The most impressive 128K exclusive wouldn't arrive until August 1988. Developed by Denton Designs and published by Ocean, *Where Time Stood Still* was the closest thing yet to a Spectrum mega-game. Not only was this sprawling adventure far too big for 48K but, technically, it couldn't be done without compromising the game's visual impact. This was because it used the shadow screen (that was only present in the 128K hardware) as a double-buffer to produce a large, smooth-scrolling playing area. The result was a game that truly showcased the bigger-memory rendition of the Spectrum.

Where Time Stood Still was followed by two high profile 128K-only titles – Gremlin's

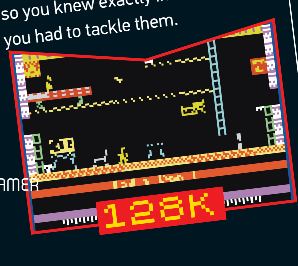
128Ks LATER

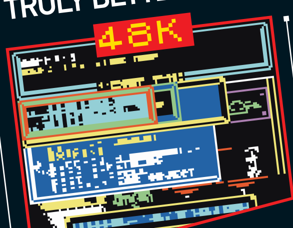
TEN TITLES THAT WERE TRULY BETTER ON THE 128 COMPARED TO THE STANDARD 48K VERSIONS



TECHNICIAN TED
DEVELOPER: HEWSON
YEAR: 1986

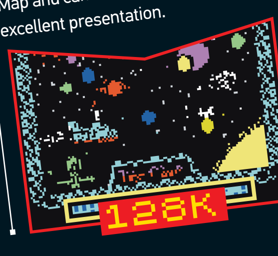
■ Of all of the revamped 48K games available at the 128's launch, this 'Mega-Mix' of the popular platformer was the best of the lot. As you would expect it added AY music and extra screens (doubling the number of rooms in the factory to 100), but the programmers clearly listened to feedback and made the update much more forgiving that the original incarnation. Chiefly, Ted's various jobs were now numbered so you knew exactly in which order you had to tackle them.





KNIGHT TYME
DEVELOPER: DAVID JONES
YEAR: 1986

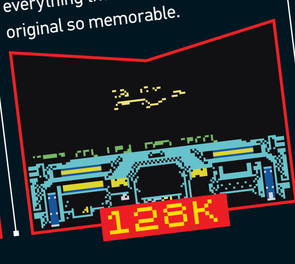
■ Mastertronic made a mockery of the 128 launch line-up with this. Whereas other publishers were reheating old games and then, in some cases, charging people extra for the privilege, this original 128K exclusive was sold as a budget title. The third *Magic Knight* game was much bigger than previous entry *Spellbound* and featured a fantastic spacey tune courtesy of David Whittaker. The use of in-game 'SCREEN$' images such as the Star Map and camera flash added to the excellent presentation.





STARGLIDER
DEVELOPER: REALTIME GAMES
YEAR: 1986

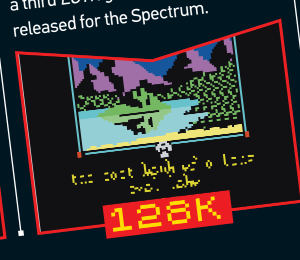
■ The Spectrum version was surprisingly close to the Atari ST original – but only on the 128K. The 48K version was stripped down considerably: there was no AY sound or speech and cool features like the rear view display and action replay mode were missing. Crucially, the various missions were removed so all you could do was fly around space and shoot stuff. The 128K version, on the other hand, retained pretty much everything that made the Atari ST original so memorable.

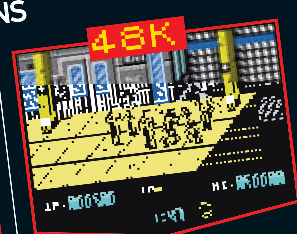




SHADOWS OF MORDOR
DEVELOPER: BEAM SOFTWARE
YEAR: 1987

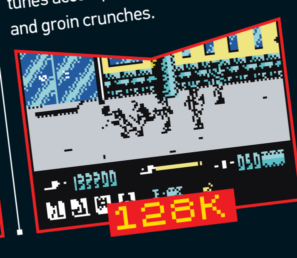
■ Following *The Hobbit* and *The Lord Of The Rings*, Melbourne House's third Tolkien game was another memorable adventure. It was the first one to benefit from a 128K version which included 40 illustrated scenes, whereas on 48K it was a text only affair. The scenes were well drawn and, unlike the earlier games, they appeared instantly – no waiting for them to be drawn on screen. Factoid: there was a third *LOTR* game but it was never released for the Spectrum.





RENEGADE
DEVELOPER: IMAGINE SOFTWARE
YEAR: 1987

■ There's a chance you might have completely missed the definitive home version of *Renegade*. That is, if you didn't read the inlay where you were told that the 128K version could be found on the unlabelled side of the tape. Load it up and you'd be presented with the full game, complete with the shoulder throw move and the fourth 'scene', which were cut from the 48K version. In addition, Fred Grey's brilliant AY tunes accompany the face smacks and groin crunches.



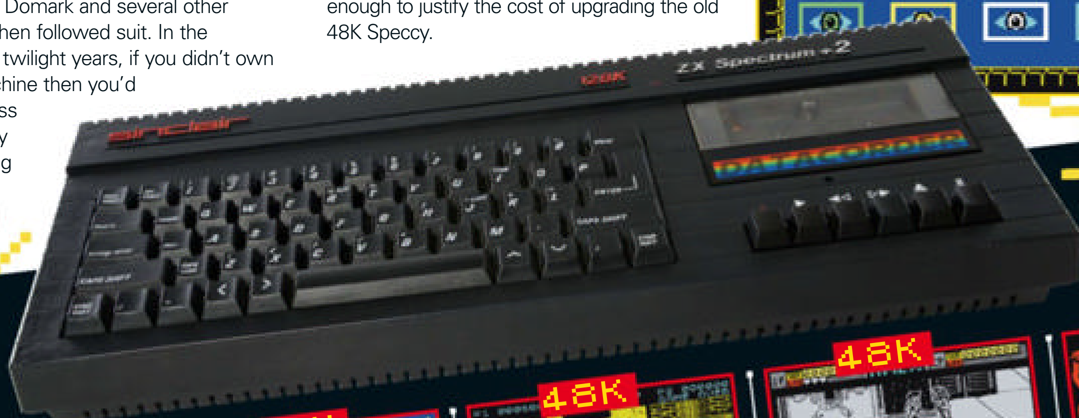
The Muncher and Rainbird's *Carrier Command* – but it wasn't until 1990 that 128K games really became commonplace. Rather fittingly it was Ocean, the company that backed the 128 from the very beginning, that ushered in the change with its key Christmas 1990 line-up. *RoboCop 2*, *Chase HQ 2*, *Pang* and *NARC* would only run on 128K machines. It was an expected and largely unopposed shift, with the presumption being that anyone still buying full-price Spectrum software would have likely upgraded to a new 128K model at some point. It was also good news for the developers, which were now working to a 128K spec.

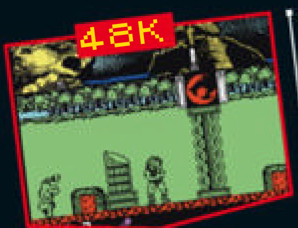
US Gold, Domark and several other publishers then followed suit. In the Spectrum's twilight years, if you didn't own a 128K machine then you'd certainly miss out on many chart-topping titles. But then, if you weren't a fan of uninspired film licences and overambitious coin-op conversions then perhaps you weren't missing out that much after all.

Which brings us back to Sir Clive's opening speech at the 128's London launch, where he boldly predicted the arrival of games "quite unlike anything seen before". That was funny then and even funnier now, particularly as early 128K games were *entirely like* everything seen before, with just a few tweaks and twiddles. Yet, over the years, the 128K software library slowly amassed a decent amount of accomplished, must-have titles – certainly enough to justify the cost of upgrading the old 48K Speccy.



» [Spectrum] "I am Rasputin, heh heh heh!" mocked the sinister green face on the 128K version of the game.

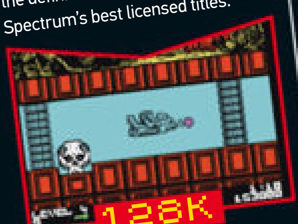




THUNDERCATS

DEVELOPER: GARGOYLE GAMES
YEAR: 1987

■ When it comes to Gargoyle's best 128K games it's a close call between this cartoon tie-in and *Sweevo* sequel *Hydrofool*. *ThunderCats* just takes it thanks to the number of neat digitised images used throughout, both between scenes and above the gameplay window (these are present in the 48K version but there's far fewer of them). Throw in Rob Hubbard's fantastic three-channel music and you've got the definitive version of one of the Spectrum's best licensed titles.

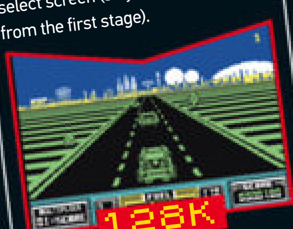


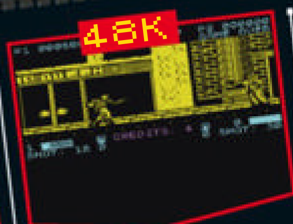


ROAD BLASTERS

DEVELOPER: DJL SOFTWARE
YEAR: 1988

■ A clear case of a game developed with the 128 upgrade in mind and then roughly adapted for 48K machines. The expected bells and whistles are missing from the 48K version, but the gameplay is noticeably inferior as well. The perception of speed is diminished (due to the removal of the horizontal plane lines) and the car handling is horribly sluggish. To compound matters, stages have to be multi-loaded in and there's no difficulty select screen (so you always start from the first stage).

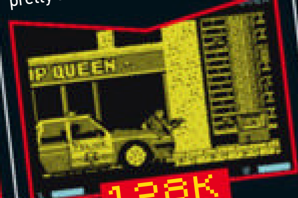




ESWAT

DEVELOPER: CREATIVE MATERIALS
YEAR: 1991

■ The curious thinking that blighted *Double Dragon II* was also inflicted on US Gold's *ESWAT* conversion. But, rather that just showing some of the action, here the display was squeezed into the top half of the screen so that everything looked wonky and distorted. It was as if someone had stretched an original Game Boy game. Some graphics were missing too, like the cop car at the beginning of most levels. The 128K version was full screen but still pretty awful. One to avoid!

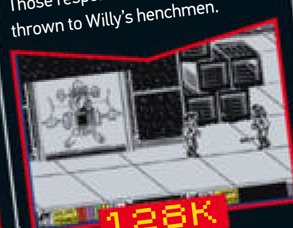




DOUBLE DRAGON II

DEVELOPER: BINARY DESIGN
YEAR: 1989

■ This coin-op conversion was originally released as a 128K exclusive and it was a decent attempt – monochrome graphics but a damn sight more playable than the original Spectrum *Double Dragon*. But then, a separate 48K version was released (or rather slipped out, unnoticed by many). For some bewildering reason almost half of the screen was blanked out so it was like playing the game through a letterbox. Those responsible should have been thrown to Willy's henchmen.





BARBARIAN

DEVELOPER: PALACE SOFTWARE
YEAR: 1987

■ There was no 128K version of *Barbarian* – officially at least – but the game is among dozens of 48K titles which have been enhanced by coding groups over the years. The 128K *Barbarian* mod by Bitmunchers is one of the best, featuring an animated intro, brand new backdrops and exhilarating AY music throughout. Other games that have received excellent 128K mods include *Dynamite Dan*, *Dan Dare*, *Arkanoid*, *Mercenary*, *Thanatos* and *Head Over Heels*.





Rainbow Walker

NOTHING TO DO WITH THE WIZARD OF OZ

» RETROREVIVAL

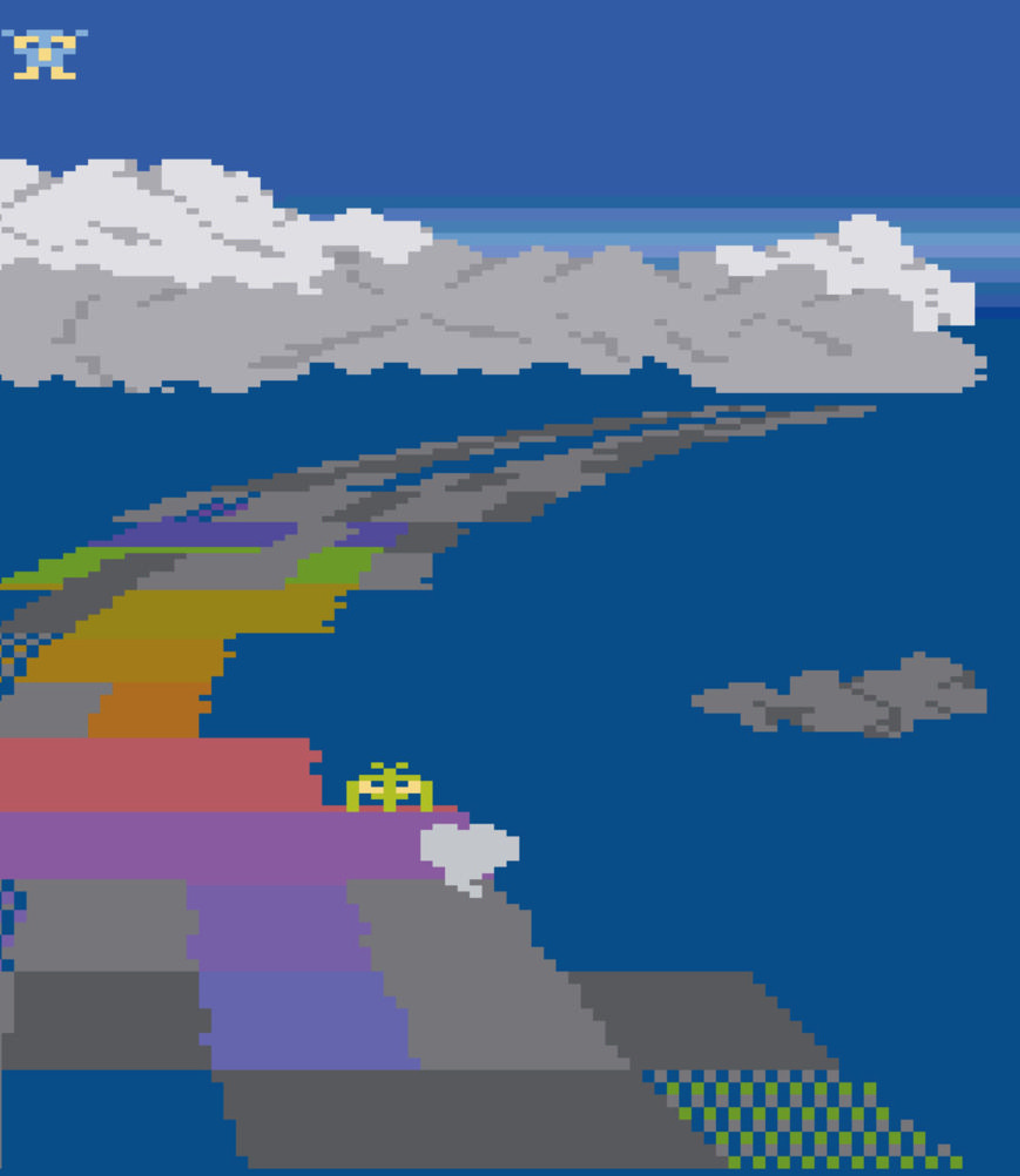
» **Atari A8**
» **Synapse Software**
» **1983**

Synapse Software is better known for the likes of *Blue Max*, *Alley Cat* and *Shamus*, but it's the delightful *Rainbow Walker* by Steve Coleman that remains my favourite game by the developer. It's something of an oddity, playing like a bizarre cross between *Trailblazer*, *Q*bert* and *Wizball*, but the end result is a highly refreshing game that still packs a tough challenge today.

Playing a brave warrior named Cedric, you start off on a drab colourless rainbow and must restore it to its former beauty by jumping from tile to tile. It's a concept that works extremely well, with Cedric being able to jump in eight directions as he attempts to restore colour to the world below him. Press the fire button and Cedric increases his jump by an additional space, handy for clearing the rainbow's many gaps.

To make Cedric's task more difficult, numerous enemies will appear, some of which will make coloured tiles grey again once they come into contact with them. Certain enemies will push Cedric backwards, kill him on contact or fly off with him before dumping him into the ether, so they need to be avoided.

Fortunately, certain tiles feature power-ups that can aid Cedric's adventure, with the best ones being freeze squares that allow Cedric to stomp enemies with his magic boots. Fast paced and with slick arcade controls, *Rainbow Walker* is a complete and utter gem that does Synapse proud.



IN POLE POSITION

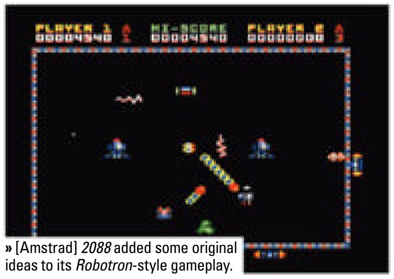
Racing into the competitive budget market, Zeppelin Games (now Eutechnyx) has stayed on track for the last 25 years. Andrew Fisher talks to founder Brian Jobling and the people who made the games to find out how the company has changed

Many stories of software houses from the Eighties include a teenager programmer buying a fast car, and this one is no exception. "At the age of 14 I wrote a 'complete copier' programme which allowed the user to copy any tape game," recalls Brian Jobling of his start in the industry.

"At the age of 14 I wrote a 'complete copier' programme which allowed the user to copy any tape game," recalls Brian Jobling about his start in the industry. "One publisher realised the potential and suggested that I use my cracking knowledge to create a protection system. I started writing protection systems for the major gaming publishers at a royalty of two pence per cassette. By the time I was 17, I had made enough money to buy my first Porsche." Brian left school and started working for Tynesoft as a programmer. "During this time I met Derek Brewster, a renowned games programmer who was responsible for *Codename MAT*." Derek had left his previous position as adventure columnist for *CRASH*. The pair decided to form their own development studio, Zeppelin Games, in November 1987. After working from home for years, the company opened for business at offices on Osborne Road in Newcastle.

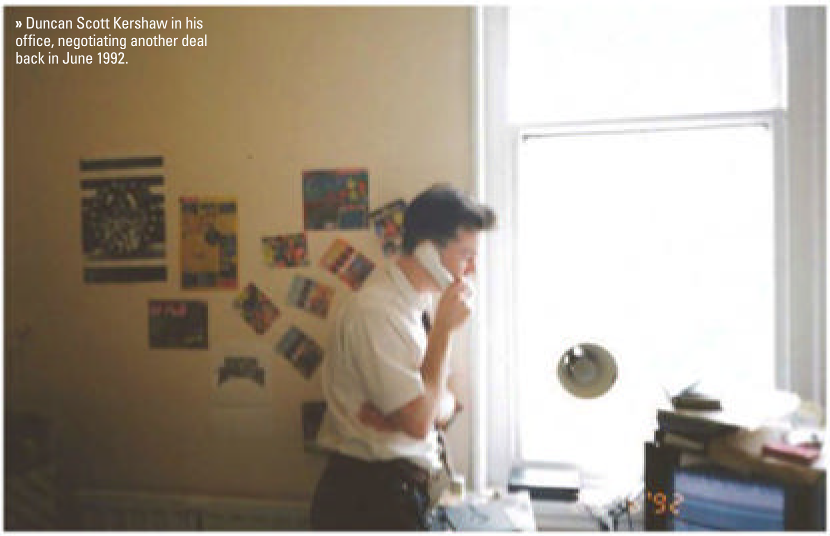
The first wave of software set a high standard. *Draconus* featured excellent graphics and a main character who switched from fire-breathing beast to swimming fish. Duncan Scott Kershaw, who would later write games for Zeppelin, recalls, "I remember buying that game to check out the competition and was massively impressed. It really was a great game. It doesn't look much today but, at the time, it totally raised the quality bar for budget games." *Zybex* earned a prestigious *ZZAP!* Silver Medal and wowed fans with its horizontally scrolling shoot-'em-up action. Key members of the in-house team were programmer Kevin Franklin, graphic artist Michael Owens and musician Adam Gilmore. Brian himself continued to program for the Atari 8-bit machine.

Brian admits that things were pretty tough to start with. "I started Zeppelin Games with the mindset of giving it two years, but 25 years later Eutechnyx is still here! In the early days of the industry it was an extremely cut-throat market. Every game was piggybacked by a different studio's take on the same idea – if one studio had success with a game, it was inevitable that soon enough there would be multiple takes on the same idea or style of game. It was a great time though – with Mastertronic, Ocean, Imagine, Codemasters, Quicksilva, Hi-Tec, etc – great British innovators leading the world in game development."



» [Amstrad] *2088* added some original ideas to its *Robotron*-style gameplay.

After co-founders Derek Brewster and Martin O'Donnell left the company in 1989, Brian's brother Darren would join full-time. The company moved to Houghton-le-Spring near Durham. Big name licenses including the hit TV show *Neighbours* required a bigger budget and were published on Impulze, a new full-price label. There were also games for the 16-



» Duncan Scott Kershaw in his office, negotiating another deal back in June 1992.

bit Amiga and Atari ST. To stay competitive, new games were bought in from other developers to publish, and Zeppelin would often commission teams or programmers to complete a game to a design. One such programmer was Michael Batty.

"I contacted Zeppelin in spring 1990 when I was trying to sell *Earth Shaker* to a software company. It was good to find a Spectrum software company in the North East," says Michael. "Unfortunately Zeppelin turned *Earth Shaker* down. They could see it was a good piece of work but were wary of publishing it because First Star had been threatening legal action against *Boulder Dash* 'clones' at the time. But they asked me if I would like to work on *Full Throttle II* instead." This was a planned sequel to a game by Mervyn J Estcourt, as Zeppelin had re-released his *Deathchase* and *Full Throttle* games (through Derek Brewster's contacts with Micromega). "Estcourt's gameplay was spot on in both *Full Throttle* and *Deathchase* (which I preferred). I don't think my gameplay was ever going to match that. I was reasonably pleased with it, as it was only eight or ten weeks' work."

Michael was studying mathematics at Edinburgh University and only occasionally went to the offices. "I found Zeppelin's offices in Houghton relaxed and friendly and enjoyed going there. It was quite small, compared with Eutechnyx anyway. Two or three of the staff had their own offices and there was a programmer's room and a big store room full of tapes which I'm sure led down to deep underground caverns full of even more tapes. Brian and Darren had bags of enthusiasm and a professional manner about them." Zeppelin presented Michael with another game to work on – *Tai Chi Tortoise*. "That was a name they came up with along with the (somewhat bonkers) plot about the future of cheese. *Teenage Mutant Hero Turtles* [was] popular at the time so I assume it was based on that. Like *Full Throttle II*, I was given a half-finished piece of code someone else had been working on but I found it easier to start from scratch myself and use my own library of routines. I used Zeppelin's game concepts but did my own graphics and music. I

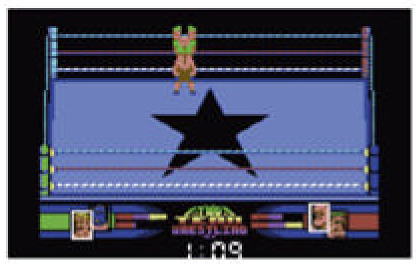
> "In the early days of the industry it was an extremely cut-throat market"
> BRIAN JOBLING

SOFT SOAP

How do you turn a TV soap opera into a computer game? Datasoft transformed the machinations of the Ewing family into a text adventure with *The Dallas Quest*. Macsen's Spectrum *Eastenders* game was a series of terrible mini-games based in locations around Albert Square. So what did Impulze (Zeppelin's full price label) do with the lucrative *Neighbours* license? They turned it into a racing game set in Erinsborough.

The player controlled Scott Robinson on his skateboard, with up to four other characters to compete against. Charlene had a go-kart, Henry his ride-on lawnmower, Mike was on another skateboard and Matt had borrowed Mike's motorbike. It all made as much sense as a Harold Bishop storyline, with players dodging kangaroos and remote controlled cars in boring isometric tracks that resembled *Paperboy*. By the time it was released, nearly all of the characters depicted had left the show…



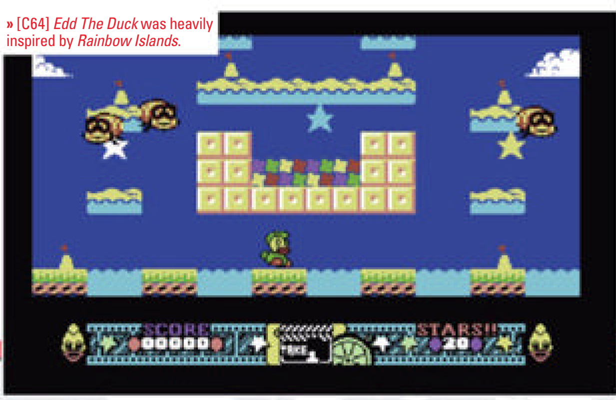


» [C64] This hold from *Tag Team Wrestling* is illegal in some countries.



» [C64] Guide your sleepwalking uncle back to his bed in *Sleepwalker*.

» Drew Rodgers has kept some of his old C64 development disks.



» [C64] *Edd The Duck* was heavily inspired by *Rainbow Islands*.



INSTANT EXPERT

- Zeppelin formed in 1987 and remains in business as Eutechnyx, now specialising in racing and driving games. The company has stayed loyal to the North East of England, starting in Newcastle and now based in Gateshead.
- Brian Jobling was just 17 when he co-founded Zeppelin with Derek Brewster, Spectrum programmer and former *CRASH* columnist.
- There were four different labels under the Zeppelin banner – Cognito, Impulze, Zeppelin Premier and Zeppelin Platinum.
- The Zeppelin Air Crew club gave two free 8-bit budget games or one free 16-bit game to new members for the £7.99 subscription fee, along with posters and a magazine. Several software companies at the time ran their own clubs, offering discounts and merchandise.



» [Atari 8-Bit] The match highlights sequence from the Kenny Dalglish endorsed football management game.



» [C64] Pixel versions of Jimmy Hill and Des Lynam introducing the highlights in *Match Of The Day*.

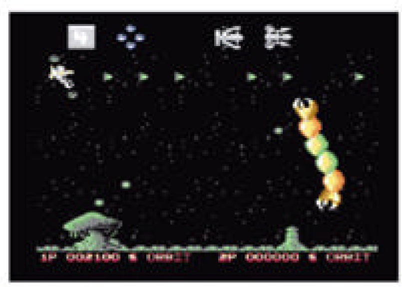
TIMELINE

1987
DEREK BREWSTER AND BRIAN JOBLING FORM ZEPPELIN GAMES, WITH AN EMPHASIS ON BUDGET SOFTWARE.

1989
THE JOBLING FAMILY HOLDS 100 PER CENT OF THE COMPANY SHARES, APPOINTING BRIAN AS MANAGING DIRECTOR. DARREN JOBLING JOINS THE COMPANY.

Among the programming teams that worked for more than one budget publisher was Reflective Designs, based in Bradford's Wool Exchange and headed by programmer Duncan Scott Kershaw and musician Gerald Gourley. Duncan first got into programming in 1983, and talks about his first project for Zeppelin, completed in 1990. "I was a freelance coder and just finished off *Cobra Force* for Players Premier, and wanted a quick project to pay for a lad's holiday to Corfu. I called Zeppelin and signed up to do *Kick Box Vigilante* for £750. A month later I sent them the finished game, received my cheque and went on holiday. Back in the day, nobody did any QA on our titles; you coded them, got your mates to play the game and often sent them directly to the duplication factory. I could have put anything on the tape…"

Duncan describers how tough it was to get into the industry. "It was a matter of sending off dozens of floppy disk submissions to publishers and hoping they'd like what you'd made. After eventually getting my first game published, it became easier to sign up new projects. To get work, you'd just call publishers asking if they had any games they wanted making or converting. Most deals were done on the phone, followed by a contract a few days later." Zeppelin approached Duncan with an idea for another title. "Zeppelin asked for a 'Christmassy type game' – I agreed and re-skinned a scrolling shoot-'em-up I was working on (later to be released as *Steel Eagle* for Players Premier). A good friend of mine, Mark Wilson, wrote



» [C64] *Zybex* is an ace scrolling shoot-'em-up that you need to play.



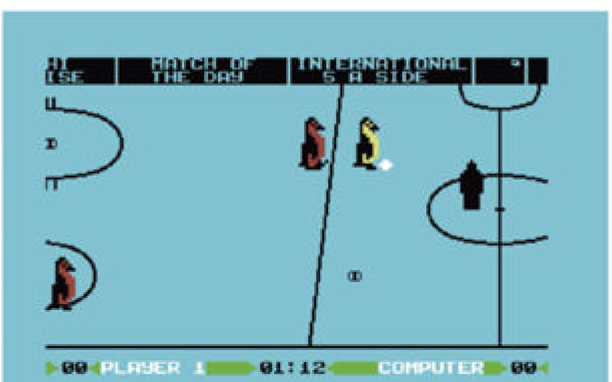
» [C64] *Fist Fighter* was a budget take on *Street Fighter II* but reviewed poorly.

had lots of spare graphics kicking around from half-finished games."

Ninjas were also popular with budget companies – Mastertronic had Sculptured Software's flick-screen *Ninja* and Firebird released *Ninja Master* with its Decathlon-style events. Zeppelin jumped onto the ninja bandwagon with two releases of its own. *Ninja Commando* stood out with its tiny well-animated sprites, the ninja leaping onto bad guys to earn extra weapons. Robert Toone, part of the Gremlin team based in Derby that became the core of Core Design, contributed his personal project *Bionic Ninja*.

"*Bionic Ninja* was one of the first games I ever programmed, it was a spare time effort with graphics by my good friend Simon Phipps. I had the design down and used this game to really learn how to program whole games with all their complexities," says Robert. "We found Zeppelin after we finished it, as we needed a publisher and they were advertising for games to release. They were very professional and my dealings with them were without incident, which is always a nice thing. I do remember very clearly the displays they had in the computer games shops at the time, and being very proud to have one of my own games on their list."

Looking back at the game for this feature, Robert found a video playthrough online. "I have to tell you, it made me a little sad. People just come along and demean your game, one that you poured yourself into for a small portion of your life. I still believe the basic design to be good, learn each bad guy who has particular weaknesses and then on later levels mix and match them to create a more interesting gameplay experience."



» [C64] P…p…play as a penguin in *International 5-A-Side*'s hidden mode.

1993 ZEPPELIN COLLABORATES WITH CODEMASTERS ON THE PETE SAMPRAS AND MICRO MACHINES CONSOLE GAMES. THE COMPANY RELEASES ITS LAST 8-BIT TITLES.

1994 MERIT STUDIOS BUYS THE COMPANY AND RENAMES IT MERIT STUDIOS EUROPE.

1996 THE COMPANY IS RENAMED EUTECHNYX AND GAINS A LICENSE TO DEVELOP AND PUBLISH GAMES FOR PLAYSTATION. INFOGRAMES PURCHASES A STAKE AND SIGNS AN EXCLUSIVE PUBLISHING DEAL. EUTECHNYX FOCUSES ON DRIVING & RACING GAMES.

2000 THE PUBLISHING AGREEMENT WITH INFOGRAMES ENDS. THE JOBLINGS REGAIN TOTAL CONTROL OF EUTECHNYX.

2003 EUTECHNYX OUTSOURCES WORK TO STUDIOS IN EUROPE AND CANADA.

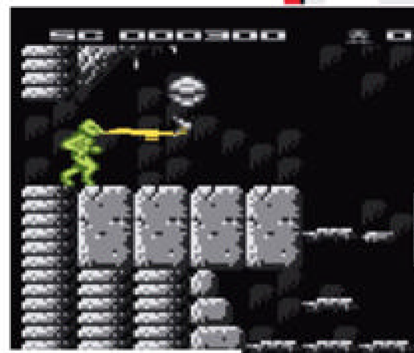
2006 SUBSIDIARY COMPANIES SET UP IN THE USA, CHINA AND HONG KONG.

2009 EUTECHNYX GAINS THE TOP SECRET RACING FRANCHISE.

2010 INVESTMENT FROM PRIMEVENTURES WORTH $10 MILLION HELPS EUTECHNYX BECOME A PUBLISHER AGAIN.

2011 ACTIVISION PUBLISHES NASCAR 2011: THE GAME, THE FIRST NASCAR GAME DEVELOPED BY EUTECHNYX AFTER EA SPORTS' LICENSE ENDS.

2012 THE FREE-TO-PLAY BROWSER-BASED RACING GAME AUTO CLUB REVOLUTION IS LAUNCHED.



» [Atari 8-Bit] Kill it with fire. *Draconus* had a neat way of dealing with the numerous enemies.

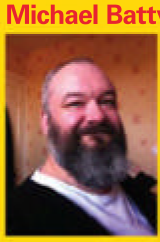
WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



Brian and Darren Jobling

Brian (pictured, right) has stayed at the company throughout the last 25 years, now in the role of executive chairman and frequently flying around the world to supervise development. Other family members have been involved, with brother Darren (pictured left) the current Chief Operating Officer.

Michael Batty



Michael earned his mathematics degree and became Doctor Batty in 1998, studying geometric group theory and the group-theoretic aspects of quantum computing. After lecturing at several major universities, Michael retrained in computer science and went into web design. Currently working for web design agency TH_NK in Newcastle, among his projects is the www.pottermore.com website for *Harry Potter* fans.

Duncan Scott Kershaw



Duncan worked for Codemasters, where he created music drivers for the Game Gear and Master System. As he puts it himself, he "turned to the dark side" and became a producer. He is currently at Square Enix London, where he was proud to be part of the team that brought *Sleeping Dogs* to the market.

Robert Toone

Robert was at Core Design until 1994, before briefly joining Malibu Games (a subsidiary of THQ). At Mass Media Inc, formed by former Cinemaware directors, he worked on the Nintendo 64 conversion of *StarCraft*. When THQ closed the studio, Robert was part of the new Mass Media Games start-up that rose from the ashes.

Drew Rodger

After Zeppelin, Drew's next job in the games industry was at Crush! Holdings, run by industry veteran Jon Dean. He describes it as a fun place to work with many talented people and late-night *Quake* LAN sessions. Cash flow problems saw the company close just four months after Drew had joined. Drew switched to IT and is currently telecommuting from his home in Belfast.

> "License holders trust us with their intellectual property"
> BRIAN JOBLING

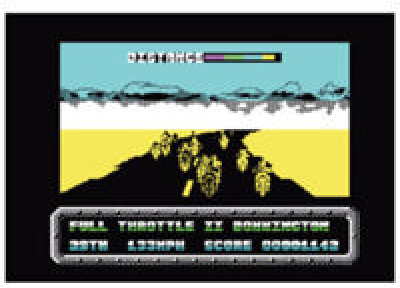


the music for the game, which gave it a nice cheesy Christmassy vibe. Believe it or not, that game (*Santa's Christmas Capers*) went to number one." The story has an unhappy ending, with Duncan taking legal action to get full payment – something that happened with many companies at the time, making such freelance work precarious. He talks fondly about his haunted office, the bizarre moment a gun was pushed through the letterbox one lunchtime and how he misses coding. "The industry has changed massively over the years, but I still enjoy making games and feel privileged to work in such an exciting business. You knew where you were with 64K of RAM, the SID and VIC chips, and 6502 assembly."

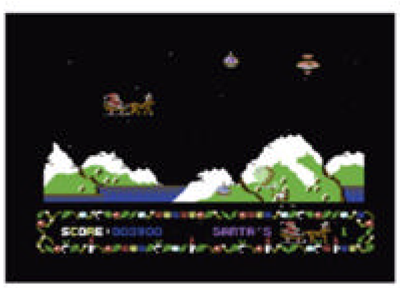


» [PlayStation] *Total Drivin'* was the game that set a new direction for the newly-renamed Eutechnyx.

Zeppelin carried on supporting the 8-bit machines well into the Nineties, which was applauded by the magazines at the time. "It was part of the heritage of Zeppelin Games and, at that time, there was still a great demand for the software," explains Brian. Among the last wave of titles was the brilliant *Arnie* ▶



» [Spectrum] Michael Batty's *Full Throttle II* in action.

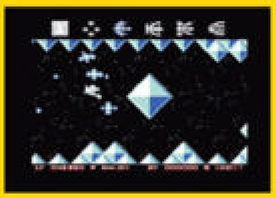


» [C64] Alternative had *The Official Father Christmas*, so Zeppelin published *Santa's Christmas Capers*.



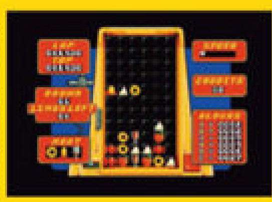
» [C64] An Atari ST version of Zeppelin's second logo, after rebranding in the early Nineties.

DEFINING GAMES



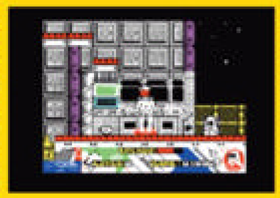
ZYBEX

One of the best horizontally scrolling shoot-'em-ups on 8-bit and all at a budget price. Great visuals and sounds on all formats complement the excellent weapon system (collect weapons to increase their strength, lose strength from the weapon you are holding when you die) and the choice of route through the game.



STACK UP

Taking its cue from *Columns*, this is a bright and colourful puzzle game on both 8 and 16-bit formats. The difficulty level soon builds up but it has that elusive 'just one more go' factor that is typical of the best games in the genre. It also proved that there was more to Zeppelin Games than just sports and racing titles. An enjoyable puzzler.



TITANIC BLINKY

This was Blinky's second outing, the first being *Blinky's Scary School*. The little ghost has to thwart eccentric millionaire Arthur J Hackensack in his base – the recently raised SS Titanic. The end result is a great mixture of puzzles and platform action, with cute and colourful graphics that could rival the best *Dizzy* games.



ARNIE (C64)

Chris Butler delivered a budget blast in the mould of *Commando* – one man taking on an army in a twisting maze of isometric scrolling. Diminutive sprites and powerful extra weapons make this a lot of fun. The horizontally scrolling Amiga game is very different, and the C64 sequel that arrived in 1993 has its flaws.



AUTO CLUB REVOLUTION

Could free-to-play be the future for the company? This PC game has single and multiplayer modes on recreated tracks, but it is the community features (with players racing in Auto Clubs to climb the leaderboards and earn new licensed cars like this gorgeous Mclaren MP4) that will appeal the most.

by veteran C64 coder Chris Butler and the very cute platform game *The Bod Squad* – featuring an alien who travelled through time in a blue police box. Zeppelin also re-released its full price titles at a budget price but continued to create original titles for various systems. Working on many of those late releases was musician Drew Rodger, who first got a Commodore 64 in 1984 and started composing after meeting fellow musician Barry Leitch at his local computer club.

"I'd get a phone call from Gareth Briggs (development manager) who would give me the title of the game – for example, '*International 5-A-Side*' and verbally list the tunes and sound effects required: Title music, Hi-Score, Game-Over, Whistle, Crowd Cheer etc. I'd normally have three or four days to turn that around," remembers Drew. "*Sleepwalker* was the first commercial game I worked on so that was a real buzz, but at the same time it was a bit terrifying to think that I was involved in creating something that would actually be sold in shops! The *Sleepwalker* title music was 'inspired' by the tune playing over the end credits to a children's wildlife program that just happened to be on TV the afternoon I got the job!" *Sleepwalker* (not to be confused with Ocean's *Comic Relief* game) sees a young man trying to protect his sleepwalking uncle from the many hazards (loose wires, falling bricks and exposed nails) around a dilapidated mansion. Drew tried out ideas on a Yamaha keyboard before entering all the notes manually in an assembler. "Zeppelin were fun to work for and (almost) always paid me on-time. I think they liked me because I was cheap!"

The big change came in 1993. "Zeppelin Games was sold to Merit Studios in 1993 and was renamed Merit Studios Europe. This allowed all games produced in the European offices to be published in the US market and all the US produced games could be published in the European market. The move was an invaluable experience – it taught us everything we know about the Americans and the American market," Brian remembers. Just two titles would be published under the Merit Studios name – *The Machines* (a PC port of Amiga game *Universal Warrior*) and *Bud Tucker In Double Trouble*.

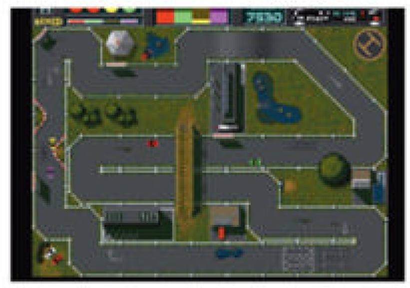


As the company looked to new markets, it worked alongside former rivals Codemasters on licensed console games. The *Pete Sampras* tennis games for the Mega Drive used the innovative J-Cart to provide multiplayer action, including four human players for a game of doubles. Zeppelin also worked on converting *Micro Machines* to the SNES. However, the new generation of CD-based consoles offered a big opportunity, and came with a new name.

> "Brian and Darren had bags of enthusiasm and a professional manner about them"
> MICHAEL BATTY



» [Atari ST] True to life, rain stops play in a game between England and Australia (*World Class Cricket*).



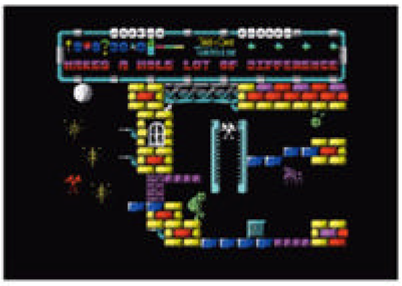
» [Amiga] *Carnage* was a 16-bit top-down racer.

"Darren got the name out of an old English dictionary, just below Eurythmics," says Brian. "Eutechnyx was originally spelt Eutechnics, which means 'a well-ordered sequence of events' – which is exactly what computer game code is. Unfortunately, at the time, the domain name Eutechnics.com was already taken, so we decided to change the spelling to Eutechnyx. We have regretted it ever since, having to spell it at least five times every day!" The newly named company parted with Merit Studios, earned a license to develop and publish games on the PlayStation and entered into a three-year publishing deal with the French company Infogrames. This is also the time when the emphasis on racing and driving titles first came to the fore.

"In 1996, Eutechnyx had two games in development for the original PlayStation – one was an RPG called *Sato City* and the other a driving game, *Total Drivin'*. When the deal with Infogrames was made the publisher was keen to produce a racing game to add to their catalogue – so, *Total Drivin'* it was and the rest is history!" explains Brian, adding "If we had made *Sato City*, it all could have been so different…"

The company has continued to develop and publish games with cars – and trucks

» [Spectrum] Who says tortoises can't do Tai Chi?



– in them. *Le Mans 24 Hours* (known as *Test Drive Le Mans* in the USA) simulated the famous endurance race and allowed the player to drive for 24 hours if they wanted to, while *007 Racing* gave the chance to drive many of the iconic cars from the *James Bond* films. *Big Mutha Truckers*, published by THQ, sold over 1 million units but drew the company into controversy. "We've worked on over 350 games, but only one of them resulted in death threats! When *Big Mutha Truckers* was released in the USA some truckers took real offence to our portrayal of the average life of a trucker. Ever since, we give those 18-wheelers a wide berth when we hit the States!" remarks Brian. Still, there was demand for a sequel.

With the Infogrames deal coming to an end, the Jobling brothers bought out the French company to regain control. The games and licenses continued, right up to the current NASCAR deal. "We attract the best staff from around the world that want to make great racing games," says Brian. "Eutechnyx has developed a great reputation for driving and racing games, including *Formula 1*, *NASCAR*, *007*, *Ferrari Challenge*, and many others. Eutechnyx has become the world's leading independent driving and racing game developer – publishers trust us with their biggest projects and license holders trust us with their intellectual property." The company has expanded overseas thanks to further investment, opening offices in three countries. It is now pushing forwards with *Auto Club Revolution* – a free-to-play browser-based racing game with several social features.

In closing, how does Brian see the future? "The computer games industry is very much about change. Over 25 years Eutechnyx has seen more than its fair share of evolution in the games market. It seems as though now we have gone full circle – starting with £1.99 tape cassette games, we've moved up to full price console £59.99 retail games and now, with the build up of mobile gaming, we are back to 99 pence! The industry very much moves in cycles and, although this change has been the most significant in 25 years, the need for great games has never disappeared. 25 years later, Eutechnyx is still here and is continuing to build upon its strengths."



THE DNA OF…

SPORTY

Sports games were a big seller for budget companies, quick to develop and guaranteed to appeal to players. Change shirt colour and you have a new character/team/country. *International Ice Hockey* and the football management games featuring Kenny Dalglish and Graeme Souness are prime examples.



ADAPTABILITY

Zeppelin has always supported different formats. In 8-bit times it released games for Atari 800 and MSX, moved onto 16-bit and PC and now Eutechnyx covers the major consoles as well as PC.



TRENDY

The budget market was filled with 'copycat' releases, so spotting a trend and getting your game out quickly was important. Be it wrestling, one-on-one combat or ninjas, Zeppelin put out its take on them all.



RACY

Zeppelin had mixed results in the racing genre, from the *Badlands/Super Sprint* inspired *Carnage* to the poorly received *International Truck Racing*. But, Eutechnyx has gone from strength to strength, gaining major licences and building a reputation.



BRAND FRIENDLY

The company built a good understanding with the BBC, licensing *Match Of The Day* as an icon-driven football management game, children's TV star Edd The Duck and soap opera *Neighbours* (then shown on the BBC). ITV's *Round The Bend* was another children's show license. Nowadays, Eutechnyx works closely with car manufacturers, racing teams and famous drivers to recreate them in-game.



retro GAMER Subscription Voucher

☑ **YES! I would like to subscribe to Retro Gamer**

YOUR DETAILS

Title__________ First name__________

Surname__________

Address__________

Postcode__________ Country__________

Telephone number__________

Mobile number__________

Email address__________

(Please complete your email address to receive news and special offers from us)

DIRECT DEBIT PAYMENT

☐ **I will receive my first 3 issues for £5, I will then pay only £22.50 every 6 issues thereafter.**

Instruction to your Bank or Building Society to pay by Direct Debit

Please fill in the form and send it to: Imagine Publishing Limited, 800 Guillat Avenue, Kent Science Park, Sittingbourne, ME9 8GU

Name and full postal address of your Bank or Building Society

To: The Manager Bank/Building Society

Address

Postcode

Name(s) of account holder(s)

Branch sort code

Bank/Building Society account number

Originator's Identification Number

5 0 1 8 8 4

Reference Number

Instructions to your Bank or Building Society
Please pay Imagine Publishing Limited Direct Debits from the account detailed in this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with Imagine Publishing Limited and, if so, details will be passed on electronically to my Bank/Building Society

Signature(s)

Date

Banks and Building Societies may not accept Direct Debit instructions for some types of account

A6 instruction form

PAYMENT DETAILS

YOUR EXCLUSIVE READER PRICE 1 YEAR (13 ISSUES)

☐ **UK £51.90 (Save 20%)** ☐ **Europe – £70.00** ☐ **World – £80.00**

Cheque

☐ I enclose a cheque for £__________
(made payable to Imagine Publishing Ltd)

Credit/Debit Card

☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐ Amex ☐ Maestro

Card number Expiry date

Security number (last three digits on the strip at the back of the card)

Issue number (if Maestro)

Signed__________

Date__________

Code: PGF119

Please tick if you do not wish to receive any promotional material from Imagine Publishing Ltd by post ☐ by telephone ☐ via email ☐

Please tick if you do not wish to receive any promotional material from other companies by post ☐ by telephone ☐ Please tick if you DO wish to receive such information via email ☐

Terms & Conditions apply. We publish 13 issues a year, your subscription will start from the next available issue unless otherwise indicated. Direct Debit guarantee details available on request. This offer expires without notice. I would like my subscription to start from issue:

Saving of 25% is based on standard cover price of £4.99

Return this order form to: Retro Gamer Subscriptions Department, 800 Guillat Avenue, Kent Science Park, Sittingbourne ME9 8GU or email it to retrogamer@servicehelpline.co.uk

You can manage your subscription account online at www.imaginesubs.co.uk

HURRY ORDER NOW



FANTASTIC SUBSCRIBER OFFER

Subscribe today and get your first three issues for £5

- Pay only £3.75 for every future issue – a 25% saving on the store price
- Free UK delivery to your door
- Never miss an issue
- Money-back guarantee

Terms & Conditions

This offer entitles new UK direct debit subscribers to receive their first three issues for £5. After these issues, subscribers will then pay £22.50 every six issues. Subscribers can cancel this subscription at any time. New subscriptions will start from the next available issue. Offer code PGF119 must be quoted to receive this special subscription price. Details of the Direct Debit guarantee are available on request. Offer expires 30th November 2013. Imagine Publishing reserves the right to limit this type of offer to one per household.
Source Code PGF119
Web address: www.imaginesubs.co.uk/ret. Tel 0844 848 8412

3 ISSUES OF RETRO GAMER FOR JUST £5







Get your first 3 issues for just £5, then save 25% on the shop price

THREE EASY WAYS TO SUBSCRIBE

1. Online

www.imaginesubs.co.uk/ret
And enter PGF119

2. Telephone

0844 848 8412
And quote PGF119

3. Post or email

Please complete and post the form to
Retro Gamer Subscriptions Department
800 Guillat Avenue
Kent Science Park
Sittingbourne
ME9 8GU

Or alternatively, you can scan and email the form to
retrogamer@servicehelpline.co.uk



CANNON FODDER

Sensible Software's Cannon Fodder was combining war and strategy long before Command & Conquer began experimenting with it. Darran Jones speaks to Jon Hare and Stuart Campbell and asks them how they created miniature mayhem



We ask Jon Hare about *Cannon Fodder*'s origins, expecting a technical insight into its development. "I think it was one of those things where we were playing around with an idea. It started off as a group of blobs probably wandering around a screen and firing in a group."

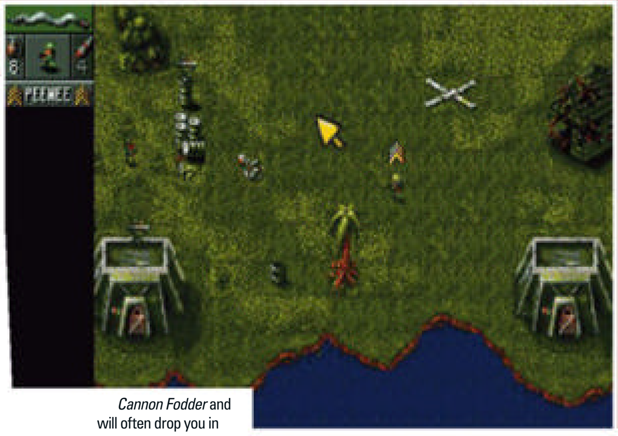
Okay, so it doesn't sound like the most wondrous of starts – considering the brilliance of the actual game in question – but, as Jon points out, game design was a lot different in the early Nineties. "A lot of the games in those days started off as things running on a screen, rather than in a document. Pretty much everything we did turned into games in those days."

As Jon warms to the subject at hand he begins to recall other slivers of information about *Cannon Fodder*'s genesis, and it soon becomes clear that its inspiration came from two very distinct games. "Remember the old game *Rambo*? The initial thought was like *Rambo*, but with a group of people. So we put some guy in the centre of the screen and got him to walk around, fire a bullet – nothing original in that – and then we kind of tagged people behind him. They would flock behind him if you [were] in a line and that was kind of the origination. [Also] at that time we were playing a lot of *Lemmings* in our office. For almost a year in our company *Cannon Fodder* was called *Lemmings With Weapons* – that was its internal name. So maybe that's where you get the group kind of thing – our mindset at the time was probably thinking about *Lemmings*, looking at combat games and how we could combine the two."

Jon and his team got to work on their idea and *Cannon Fodder* slowly began to form. Jon feels that part of the reason for its success at the time was down to the development. "Level design-wise it's the most I've ever done on a game," reveals Jon about *Cannon Fodder*'s meticulous planning. "With *Cannon Fodder* the plan was that every level would have something new in it that you'd not seen before. I would describe it as our most pre-calculated game. We worked out all the content we wanted in the game and then reverse-engineered it into level one, level two, level three, level four, so we knew that the game was always ramping up. It was deliberately built with this ramp up of content."

It was a great plan, ensuring that you'd play through each stage to see what was next in store for your miniature

» [PC] There is a variety of vehicles to use, and they get more impressive the further you get.



Cannon Fodder and
will often drop you in

hı

»

» [PC] There's plenty of variety to be found, with a lot of diversity to the environments.

on a small team that consisted of just himself, Jools Jameson – once again on programming duties – and artist John Lillee. "Sensible rang me up one day in the *Amiga Power* office and said: 'Do you fancy coming to work for us?'" recalls Stuart. "They were a bit vague about the job specifics – to be fair, that was still the case when I was actually doing the job – but they made me an offer I couldn't refus and that was that. For various reasons I wasn't very happy on *Amiga Power* at the time, so they were pushing at an open door and when I got there *Cannon Fodder 2* was my first task."

Stuart soon found himself on the other side of the joypad, designing games instead of critiquing them. We were interested to know how different game development was to actually writing about them. "While the two jobs are similar in a lot of ways – fun, creative work with close-knit teams of young people – on a magazine you get to see the fruits of your labour every month. Development is enormously slower and you're not quite so hands-on the whole time," he explains. "There's a lot of sitting around waiting for other people to do stuf before you can get on with your bit. Also, there are a lot fewer of you, which brings certain pressures. At Future there were all the other mags as well as *AP*, so your social circle comprises of hundreds of people. Sensible was stu Walden, where there isn' do, and there were only of us which obviously ha bad sides. I'd say the Se team was perhaps even tighter than the *AP* one and I enjoyed my time there immensely, but wh you spend a lot of your

orking with all day, there'll always be the dd bust-up."

Odd bust-ups aside, Stuart and his y team set to work and managed to eliver a cracking little game that, while ot doing as well as *Cannon Fodder*, still ccrued very favourable scores upon its lease. One of the biggest issues of the ame was that many felt it was more of add-on disk rather than a standalone quel – something that both Stuart and n agree with – and that it didn't feature a t of new enhancements. This was mainly e to *Cannon Fodder 2* using the same gine, which greatly cut down on the am's flexibility. "We were just stretched bit, and not putting any new features in *annon Fodder 2* was a way of de-risking at side," explains Jon about the sequel's rection. "It would have been nice to add w stuff, but then I'd have been a lot ore nervous about letting go. At least is way all I knew could go wrong was vel design, graphics and names and stuff e level design isn't an issue to me; it's ly the art really. It just came at a bad



» [PC] Some levels have natural hazards that will kill you if you stumble into them.

RETURN

Jon Hare discusses that insane difficulty spike in the original Cannon Fodder

One of the most infamous aspects of *Cannon Fodder* is the difficulty spike that hits you on Mission Eight. We were keen to get Jon's thoughts on a stage that was so difficult, Stuart Campbell (and we bet a large number of gamers) never saw past it.

"Personally, with the exception of the football games, I've not gotten that involved with the difficulty settings of any of our games," begins Jon when we broach the subject to him. "You get too close to it. You know? And you get too good at it, so I'm happy to rely on mathematical calculations of difficulty, like little equations on AI strength and stuff. We can just change numbers to make things easier. I think round about Mission Eight it got a bit complex, in retrospect."

"The thing with Mission Eight is that I just did something too clever. There was this mission and the only way you could progress was to drive a jeep off the edge of a cliff, land in some water and then jump out of the jeep before it sank and swim away. If you were watching a *Bond* movie you'd go: 'Okay, I understand what I'm doing, fair enough', but I guess it was a bit counterintuitive and that was the block that people got to. It wasn't even so much the difficulty setting of the AI, it was just the puzzle was a bit too abstract for some people."

» [Amiga] Sadly, budget cuts meant that the plot of *Cannon Fodder 2* was never really explained.

» [Amiga] I want my mummy!

still regrets). The slim coverage in the instructions left many gamers confused as to why *Cannon Fodder*'s sequel looked so different. "I think its absence diminishes the game considerably, because there's basically no explanation at all of why you're zooming about through space and time," explains Stuart. "But *Cannon Fodder 2* came out near the end of the Amiga's life as a mainstream format, and Virgin weren't interested in spending a single penny more than absolutely necessary on it. I felt a lot better after I pu the storyline on my website."

One aspect that we did find about *Cannon Fodder 2* is just how much more brutal it feels compared to the original game. The enemy AI is a lot more aggressive than we remember, while deviously placed enemies will make short work of you if you adopt a sheep mentality. *Cannon Fodder 2* rewards those who think on their feet and punishes those who play poorly. We were keen to know if Stuart was happy with the difficulty tweaks he made. "Yes, though with hindsight I think it went a bit too far," he admits. "It's the classic rookie error – you're playing it every day for weeks and months, so you get really good at it and think it's too easy. It absolutely murders m now. Then again, the target audience was people who'd played the first one to death and were therefore in much the same boa People were finishing it within days of release, so it can't have been *that* hard."

Aside from its baffling time-jumping an tough challenge, *Cannon Fodder 2*'s gaud visuals also proved a point of contention for some – particularly Jon, whose involvement with *Sensible* W *Soccer* meant he wasn't tak much note of its visuals and progress as he felt he shoul

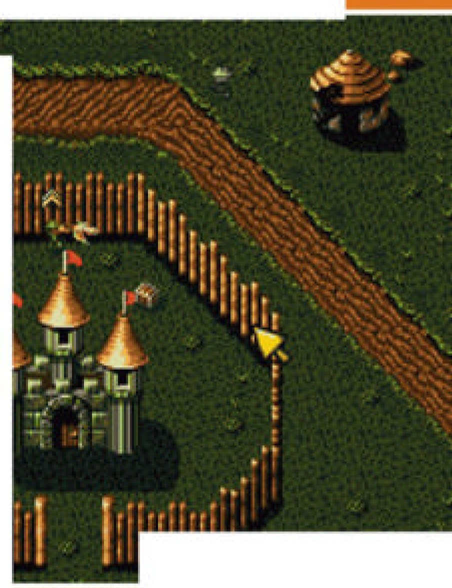
"From my point of view I'm not quite as happy with *Cannon Fodder 2* as I want

"TO ME IT'S A CROSS BETWEEN A 'NAM FILM AND BLACKADDER" JON HARE

ve been slightly stronger if *Cannon* *odder 2* had been a different sort of ame. Looked different… Look at the depth *SWOS* compared to *Sensible Soccer*, at's what we could have done and, had e been properly focussed, that's what e would have done. Don't get me wrong, n not ashamed of *Cannon Fodder 2* – *ensible Golf* was a different kettle of fish, hate *Sensible Golf* – *Cannon Fodder 2* is a ood game, I just think some of the art is a t… naff. Anyone who has run a company nd is a control freak like me is going to ake a mistake like this sometimes and be o hands-off."

Cannon Fodder ut exactly the way anted, but there's remains a highly nd a solid additio he same can't be r the third *Cann* *odder*, a disastro ttempt by Burut T to reboot the anchise for mod ay gamers. Befo

» [Amiga] There are a number of buildings on most levels that must be destroyed before you continue.



» [PC] If you thought things were hard to see in *Cannon Fodder 2*, wait until you play the mess that is *Cannon Fodder 3*.

in since leaving Sensible Software, but he was about to be dealt another cruel blow. "Codemasters, who were going through periods of getting themselves ready for sale at the time, needed some money and decided that one of the best assets they had was their Fulham office," Jon glumly recalls. "So they sold the building in Fulham for a few million quid and the whole team disappeared."

Cannon Fodder 3 disappeared with it, but Jon doggedly refused to give up on the project and before long found himself with another internal team who were at a loose end after the game they had been working on was also canned. Work started up once again, but was again aborted, meaning it was Jon's third and final strike. We begin to get as frustrated as Jon sounds on the phone because, as he starts talking about his plans for *Cannon Fodder 3*, it's clear that he still has a lot of passion and belief in the project he just couldn't get off the ground.

"This is a game I'd still like to make by the way," he tells us, before going into some of the game's more interesting mechanics. Jon goes on to describe how you would be working for the US Peace Force and would have access to a number of different men at the beginning of each stage, each with their own skill sets. Additional men can be found as you explore levels, which in turn can be added to your slowly growing army, effectively giving you more flexibility as you approach each

Cannon Fodder 3 has a Metacritic

Cannon

s

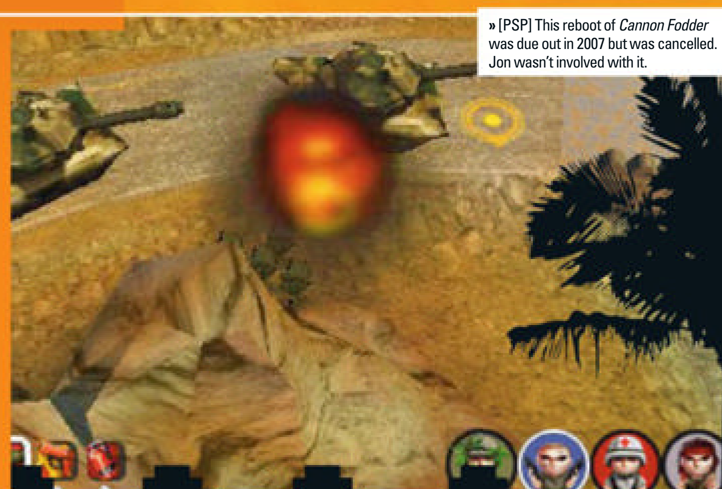
STUART CAMPBELL

the Russian conflict has now gotten worse. If you'd gone earlier the enemies wouldn't be so entrenched. Some are also building up nuclear weapons in the background, so the longer you leave them the more dangerous they get."

Sadly, the design for that particular version of *Cannon Fodder 3* stays in Jon's head for now, but a string of cancellations didn't mean that Codemasters was finished with the series. A PSP outing was planned, simply titled *Cannon Fodder* – without Jon's involvement – which featured the ability to call in air strikes and use a variety of weapons, from flamethrowers to sniper rifles. Although it was due for a release early in 2007, it never actually appeared. Instead we got *Cannon Fodder 3* – a game neither Jon nor Stuart have played – a distinctly average follow-up that boasted ugly visuals, bland level design, outdated stereotypes of enemy soldiers and lots and lots of over-the-top and rather pointless explosions. While it still looks like a *Cannon Fodder* game and plays like one, it's let down by clunkier controls, garish visuals and extremely dull level design. It's basically a poor game, considering how many years it took to actually arrive, and is a sorry note for the series to finish on.

Of course, the real question is whether Jon would ever return to attempt a *Cannon Fodder 4* if Codemasters was willing. "I'd be interested in doing it I guess – if someone's going to pay money…" Our advice for fans is not to hold your breath…

Special thanks to Jon Hare, Stuart Campbell and www.gog.com for making this article possible.



» [PSP] This reboot of *Cannon Fodder* was due out in 2007 but was cancelled. Jon wasn't involved with it.



WAR IS ~~HELL~~ FUN

More videogames set against the backdrop of war



THE GREAT ESCAPE

■ **YEAR:** 1986 ■ **DEVELOPER:** DENTON DESIGNS ■ **GENRE:** ADVENTURE

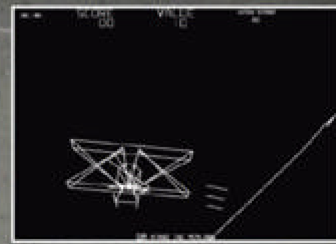
Who cares if it had little in common with the film it was based on? *The Great Escape* was a superb isometric adventure from Denton Designs that still plays brilliantly today. Unlike many other war games, you're actually a prisoner who is trying to escape his German captors. You do this by sneaking around the grounds, retrieving specific items and following the daily routines of your fellow prisoners.



BLUE MAX

■ **YEAR:** 1983
■ **DEVELOPER:** SYNAPSE SOFTWARE
■ **GENRE:** SHOOT-'EM-UP

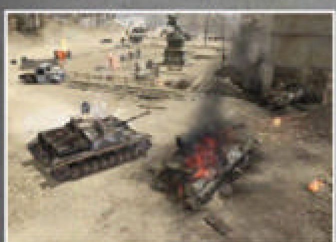
Zaxxon was an extremely popular arcade blaster, so it was only a matter of time before we got a home equivalent. *Blue Max* is one of the best, replacing the futuristic ship with a Sopwith Camel and the *Zaxxon* theme tune with *Rule Britannia*. It's a fast-paced shooter that allows you to change altitude as you weave your way past enemy fighters and take out strategically placed bomb targets. A highly satisfying blaster.



RED BARON

■ **YEAR:** 1980
■ **DEVELOPER:** ATARI INC
■ **GENRE:** FLYING

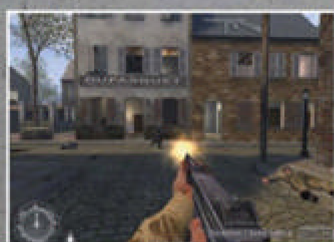
This is one of the earliest videogames set in a World War and in some respects plays like an earlier version of Atari's smash hit *Star Wars*. Playing a bi-plane pilot you must take down incoming enemy planes, while avoiding their return fire. It's effectively *Battlezone* in the sky and shares the same vector graphics hardware. It's not aged as well as the aforementioned *Star Wars*, but proved to be a lot of fun when it turned up in Game Room.



COMPANY OF HEROES

■ **YEAR:** 2006
■ **DEVELOPER:** RELIC ENTERTAINMENT
■ **GENRE:** RTS

Tremendously refreshing upon release, and not just due to its World War II setting. There's a far bigger focus on micromanagement, a huge amount of customisation and brilliantly designed maps that offer plenty of replay value. It's been supported by some excellent expansions and mods, while *Company Of Heroes 2* has just been released by Sega to critical acclaim.



CALL OF DUTY

■ **YEAR:** 2003
■ **DEVELOPER:** INFINITY WARD
■ **GENRE:** FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER

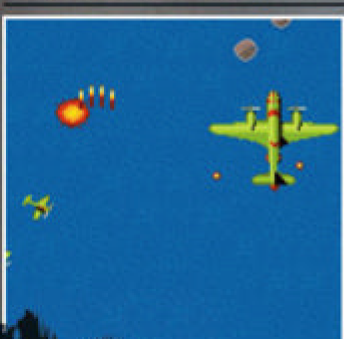
Before *Black Ops*, *Ghosts* and *Modern Warfare* there was just *Call Of Duty* – and it was great. Created by many of the team members who had worked on *Medal Of Honor: Allied Assault*, *Call Of Duty* was notable for following the exploits of three different soldiers and introducing neat effects like help from allied soldiers, cover and simulating getting tinnitus when hit by shells.

RETURN FIRE

■ **YEAR:** 1995 ■ **DEVELOPER:** SILENT SOFTWARE INC ■ **GENRE:** RTS

A thrilling game of capture-the-flag that becomes amazingly tense when played against a second player. Single-player was less exciting, as there was no proper AI in place, but the beautifully balanced multiplayer mode more than made up for it. It was later released on PlayStation and PC.





1942

■ **YEAR:** 1984
■ **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM
■ **GENRE:** CAPCOM

This fantastic shooter is set in the Pacific Theatre of World War II and focusses on you shooting down enemy fighters. There's only a single power-up on offer, but well designed attack waves and a variety of aircraft and ships ensures that the action remains fast and furious. It has spawned numerous sequels over the years, with the most recent being *1942: Joint Strike*, released in 2004.



COMMANDOS: BEHIND ENEMY LINES

■ **YEAR:** 1998 ■ **DEVELOPER:** PYRO STUDIOS ■ **GENRE:** STRATEGY

Commandos plays like a thinking man's *Cannon Fodder*. Set across impressively detailed isometric maps, you must lead your crack team of commandos behind enemy lines and use their unique skills and weapons to solve the game's many varied missions. Sneaking takes priority over gunfights, and the level design is extremely well balanced.

ATARI JAG

20 YE



"It was the first time I had encountered parallel processing, which took some getting used to" WAYNE SMITHSON

UAR

ARS ON

Atari's last games console remains one of the biggest missed opportunities in the history of our industry. Kieren Hawken went out on the prowl to find out why this much-maligned console is still purring after all these years



The Jaguar story begins back in 1989, around the same time Atari was releasing its Lynx handheld. Richard Miller – a former member of a team of ex-Sinclair engineers Flare Technology, who had previously developed the Konix Multi-System – was now a director over at Atari in Sunnyvale where it was working on a new 16/32-bit hybrid console then known as 'Blossom'.

At this point it was just a video chip and Atari required assistance in completing the project, so Richard called up his old friend from Flare, Martin Brennan, and talked him into helping. Martin renamed the project 'Panther', because his wife had recently purchased a Panther Kallista sports car, but soon realised that this project was not the way to go. While Atari had been working on the Panther, Flare had been working on a project of its own – the Flare II (the Konix was the Flare I) – which Martin believed was far superior to what Atari had. He was convinced that 3D graphics were the way to go and that the Panther, which was a basically a monster sprite engine, would soon become old hat. To Atari's credit, it listened and, in 1991, the Panther was dropped – just as it was close to completion – and the Jaguar came alive. It was Jack Tramiel himself, the legendary chairman of Atari, who chose the name based upon the same rationale as the Panther naming. With Flare being a British company, it made perfect sense to name the new console after his favourite British car company, Jaguar. Jack even wrote a letter to the iconic auto manufacturer asking if it minded him using the name.

So, the Jaguar was born, and its announcement shocked the industry with the revelation that it would be a 64-bit system with multi-processor architecture. Consumers were still caught up in the excitement of the 16-bit age, so a machine that skipped a whole generation just seemed unfathomable to some. Atari proudly boasted that its machine would be released in 1993, at under $200, and eat the competition alive. However, it was still left unclear just how Atari was going to compete with Sega and Nintendo. Several delays later the Jaguar was finally ready for release in late 1993. The console was to be manufactured by IBM in the USA, with Atari proudly displaying an American flag on the box presumably in the attempt to appeal, on a patriotic level, to the domestic market. The test markets in New York, San Francisco and smaller scale launch in London went extremely well, with the machine selling out very quickly. Manufacturing problems at IBM resulted in Atari struggling to maintain that early momentum and it was forced to cancel

Atari Jaguar CD

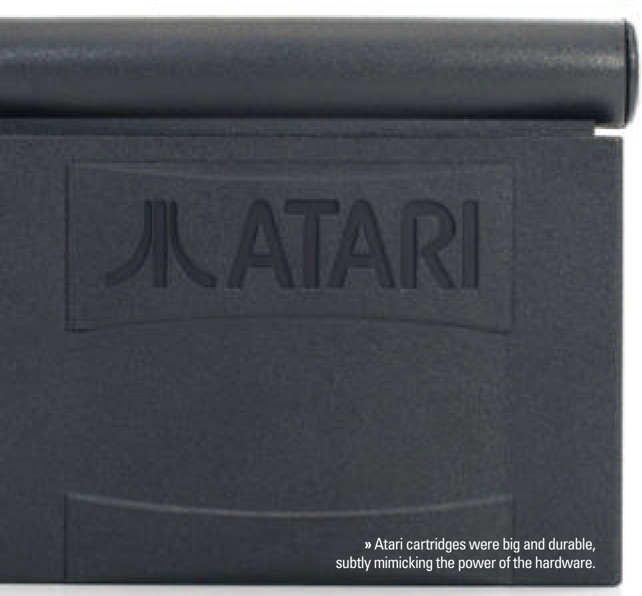
■ On 11 September 1995, the long-promised Jaguar CD finally hit the market at a price of $149.99 (£129.99 in the UK). As an add-on for Atari's already struggling 64-bit Jaguar console, Atari hoped it would help turn the tide on the Sega Saturn and Sony PlayStation.

Manufactured by Dutch company Philips, it featured a double speed CD-ROM drive that, by using a unique system, gave game developers a huge 790 Megabytes of storage capacity that exceeded the other CD-ROM systems of the time. While its design helped combat piracy, it also made it more prone to disc reading errors. With mostly standard parts to keep the cost down, the only extra hardware included was a chip called Butch that interfaced it with the main unit and added Cinepak for full motion video playback. It had been rumoured that the unit would feature a new chip to improve the 3D abilities of the Jaguar and also include extra RAM, but the design had already been finalised in the early years of the Jaguar and Atari just didn't want the extra cost.



The initial run of 20,000 units sold out within two weeks and a second batch was then ordered. However, it is unknown if that second batch even went into production or what the size of it was, as Atari went into the reverse merger with JTS only months later, liquidating all Jaguar stock. Many people who worked for the company believe that the original 20,000 units were the only ones ever made, and this would certainly explain why the system is now so rare, regularly fetching high prices on online auction sites.

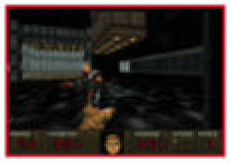
Only 13 games were officially released for the unit but this has been significantly increased by the output from the homebrew scene, which now makes the Jaguar CD a must have item for any dedicated Jaguar owner.



» Atari cartridges were big and durable, subtly mimicking the power of the hardware.

Best Jaguar Ports

STUNNING CONVERSIONS TO SEEK OUT



DOOM

YEAR: 1994

■ The Jaguar version of *Doom* became the one that many later console ports were based upon. John Carmack programmed it himself and described it as his favourite version. This superb port features over 20 levels of bloodthirsty action with full screen visuals, eerie sounds and some great lighting effects. It also makes use of the Jaguar's keypad for weapon selection and came supplied with a handy overlay.



RAIDEN

YEAR: 1993

■ One of the Jaguar's launch titles, this was also one of the few arcade conversions to appear on the machine. Upon its original release in the arcades, *Raiden* was lauded as being one of the best vertical shoot-'em-ups of all time. The overall quality of the Jaguar version far surpassed those found on the 16-bit systems of the time and, thankfully, has none of the sprite flicker or slowdown that's associated with them.



INTERNATIONAL SENSIBLE SOCCER

YEAR: 1995

■ Many people regard *Sensible Soccer* as the best football game of all time. It sold in the millions when it was released for the 16-bit home computers and soon saw its way onto consoles. This version has to rank as the best of the bunch, mostly due to the vastly improved AI that sees defenders closing you down much quicker and goalkeepers pulling off spectacular saves.



WORMS

YEAR: 1996

■ Team 17's *Worms* franchise is one that endures to this day, but many people argue that subsequent games haven't captured the magic of the original. One of the best multiplayer games out there, the Jaguar version is of particular note. It is similar to the PlayStation and Saturn versions but benefits from richer graphics and is missing bugs that plagued those ports, such as the jump bug, and odd graphical glitches.

"The Jaguar had a European soul with a Texan hat" DAVID WIGHTMAN

▶ launches in both Germany and France, with the UK initially receiving a mere 1,000 units. The full worldwide launch of the console was delayed until the summer of 1994. Games were also very slow in coming too, the machine launched with the pack-in game *Cybermorph* plus *Evolution: Dino Dudes* (a conversion of the popular *Humans*), a near arcade perfect conversion of *Raiden* and the visually stunning *Trevor McFur In The Crescent Galaxy*. The press and consumers alike were initially unimpressed with the majority of the Jaguar's launch line-up, as it contained two games already available on the Mega Drive or SNES and a game that looked great but played poorly.

The pack-in game *Cybermorph* did show promise though and received rave reviews. Attention To Detail's Fred Gill was the lead programmer on the game and remembers, "We received 390 points out of 400 in one of the US magazines, with four reviewers each having 100 points, and something like a ten page spread which really blew us away." Homebrew programmer Steve Scavone remembers the launch well from a consumer perspective, "I got one of the test market Jaguars in 1993 and, when I popped in *Cybermorph*, I was blown away that a game console could do so much." Coder of *Baldies*, David Wightman, offers up a really interesting insight into what it was like to work with Atari's console. "The Jaguar had a European soul with a Texan hat. With a few exceptions, one of the reasons Euro teams had a better time developing on the Jag was due to it being a brain in a box. Coming from 8-bit assembly coding, then onto the Amiga/ST where you ignored the OS, then onto the Jaguar where you hit the hardware directly – it was a breeze. It was a just a big fat sprite chip with a pipe to the monitor which, in those days, was developer perfection. American coders by route of the Apple II and PC had learned to go through a bios and an operating system to code, they had a tough time dropping down to binary after the luxury of APIs and libraries which they had become accustomed to. That's a core reason why very few titles came from American corporations before launch, they struggled to find people who understood how to program hardware without a soft pillow to sit on."



Throughout 1994 the software for the Jaguar just trickled in, despite over 100 titles having been announced for the machine. It soon became apparent that developing for the Jaguar was problematic for many developers. The reportedly buggy chipset and a lack of support from Atari, not helped by its precarious financial position at the time, have been cited. Fred Gill reflects, "I think Atari were, unfortunately, already in a downward spiral. They couldn't afford to create and launch a new console and so everything was done on a shoestring

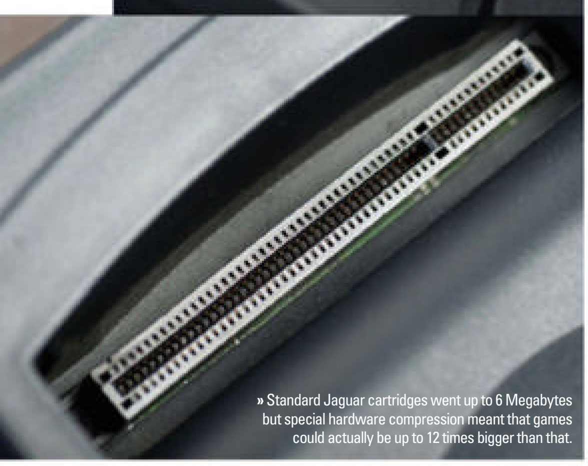


» The Jaglink cable plugged into the DSP expansion port on the back of console allowing you to link up two machines for multiplayer games such as *Doom* and *Aircars*.

budget." Darryl Still, the man behind marketing the Jaguar in Europe remembers: "To be honest, it soon became obvious that the development team in Sunnyvale were struggling with the Jaguar." This is echoed by Wayne Smithson, the man behind *Attack Of The Mutant Penguins*. "It was initially difficult to get anything decent out of it because it had more than one processor," adding "it was the first time I had encountered parallel processing which took some getting used to, interleaving instructions to get the best performance out of the code was an art form in itself." Steve Scavone was also quick to add to this discussion; "Atari was just not ready to release the system, and should have found another way to survive to get the bugs out of the system and get the proper tools in the hands of developers. I think a few more months would have been enough to do it, but everyone claims they did not have the money."



» The Jaguar's design won several awards and, with its sleek lines, you can see why.



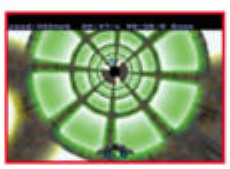
» Standard Jaguar cartridges went up to 6 Megabytes but special hardware compression meant that games could actually be up to 12 times bigger than that.

Things did improve, albeit briefly, for the Jaguar with the emergence of several key titles; Jeff Minter's *Tempest 2000*, Rebellion's *Alien Vs Predator* and id Software's port of *Doom* that was programmed by John Carmack himself. All three of these titles arrived in 1994 and were quickly praised by the expectant press. These releases actually had people suddenly wanting a Jaguar, but the continued supply problems meant that Atari just couldn't capitalise on this demand. There were also two more titles announced during 1994 that were set to arrive from teams in France and Germany respectively. Ubisoft started to show off the gorgeous *Rayman*, a title that was originally supposed to be a Jaguar exclusive and started a franchise that still endures to this day. German team Eclipse, who were well known to Amiga and ST owners, announced and promptly released the superb *Iron Soldier*, which featured fully 3D polygon-based worlds to capitalise on a consumer demand for mech games. Stefan Kimmlingen was one of the team members involved in this title and remembers the launch of both games very well, recalling, "Atari invited me to the first press conference in Germany where I won the *Kasumi Ninja* contest against guys from the German gaming press. This was also the first time ever that the *Rayman* franchise and *Iron Soldier* were shown off. I was amazed how the *Rayman* character was animated. And, of course, everybody was freaking out when they saw the explosions in *Iron Soldier*." *Iron Soldier* would go on to be one of the best selling titles for the console and spawned sequels for the Jaguar, PlayStation, VM Labs NUON and PlayStation 2.

It was in 1995 that the death knell began to toll for the Jaguar, the PlayStation and Saturn had both been released and Atari's machine just couldn't keep up. Even the release of the Jaguar CD could not help things, as it came far too late to really make any difference. This year actually saw a decent amount of releases for the machine, but many of them were just ports of existing 16-bit console games like *Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure*, *Flashback*, *Zoop* and the abysmal *Double Dragon V*. Although there were some bright lights like *Missile Command 3D*, *I-War*, *Super* ▶

Best Jaguar Homebrews

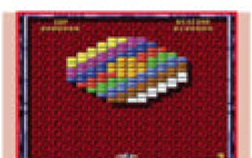
THE HOME PROJECTS YOU REALLY NEED TO PLAY



TUBE: SECOND EDITION

YEAR: 2012

■ The original version of *Tube* was rightly hailed as one of the first Jaguar homebrews to really make use of the machine. An original game with elements of *WipEout* and *STUN Runner*, it saw you racing down a series of tunnels trying to achieve the best time. What makes this game even better is that it was released for free.



IMPULSE X

YEAR: 2012

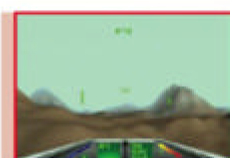
■ The original *Impulse* was a little-known *Arkanoid* clone for the 32-bit Atari Falcon by Duranik, the team behind the recent *Sturmwind* for Sega's Dreamcast. In 2012 the game was converted to the Jaguar CD by MD Games and then made available on cartridge too. The game features 40 levels of block breaking action, along with high score web codes and a level editor.



GORF

YEAR: 2006

■ This arcade perfect conversion of the classic coin-op had to be withdrawn from sale after an issue over who owned the rights with Bally/Midway. The programmer released the game with the full blessing of the original creator Jamie Fenton. If you own a Jaguar CD then this is one of the best titles out there, just be aware you'll need a huge wallet to own it these days.



FALLEN ANGELS

YEAR: 2013

■ This game is a tribute to an early title from LucasArts – *Rescue On Fractalus*. *Fallen Angels* on the Jaguar breaks new ground by being the first complete game to be released on the machine that uses a voxel engine. This helps create the fast 3D landscapes that your craft flies over as you try to rescue all the stranded pilots from their stricken vessels.

Darryl Still FORMER MARKETING MANAGER OF ATARI UK



Can you explain to us your exact involvement with the Jaguar as the Marketing Manager of Atari UK?
I joined Atari as Product Manager for the ST. There was quite a large and thriving marketing department at that time. When the Jaguar came around I was running a very small department with a, frankly, minuscule budget. The majority of the push was PR based, which was very successful in making it the must-have machine for that first Christmas. Unfortunately, most people ended up not being able to get what they must have.

You were quoted in the press as saying that Atari UK could have sold 20 times the initial allocation of machines they were given upon release. Do you feel the Jaguar should have been launched in Europe first where the Atari name was stronger?
Hell yeah, but then I am somewhat biased. There was a longer disconnect between the gamer and the Atari brand stateside than we had in most of Europe. It seemed we were getting shafted badly in favour of the US customer stock-wise. But, it was not too long before it became clear that actually there were shortages all round.

Atari missed out on most of the 16-bit generation, do you think they should have gone ahead with the cancelled Panther first?
I never knew the business reasons behind Panther's cancellation. If all things had been equal – we'd had Panther, decent stock, and a good run-up – then I suspect some things like developer and publisher involvement would have been smoother.

Can you tell us any other interesting stories about your involvement with the machine back then?
The launch in New York was fun. We took Jeff Minter into 'The Slaughtered Lamb' in Washington Square – the pub that was mocked up to mimic the one in *An American Werewolf in London*. Jeff, with his love of sheep, just sat there clutching himself and moaning.

I guess the moment that sticks in my mind most was when he first trialled the 3D surround sound unit in the small AV room and filled the whole area with games. I walked out from that just spellbound by what we could achieve. The other end of the scale was when the parent who we had not been able to supply for their much-loved son's Christmas present emptied the contents of their dustbin in our reception area.



» [Jaguar] The keypad of the Jag's controller is major part of the gameplay experience and selected games came with special overlays to improve it further.







» [Jaguar] Atari invented thed 9-pin D-plug design but finally replaced it on the Jaguar with a 15-pin variation.

Best Jaguar Exclusives

WHO SAYS ATARI'S CONSOLE HAD NO GOOD GAMES?



HOVER STRIKE: UNCONQUERED LANDS

YEAR: 1995

■ The cartridge version of *Hover Strike* was originally known as *Battlezone 2000*, and the influence is clear to see in this CD version. *Unconquered Lands* features a number of improvements, including a superior framerate, more levels, FMV intros and an external camera view. This is the game that proves that the Jaguar can do texture-mapped polygon graphics when in the right hands.



BATTLEMORPH

YEAR: 1995

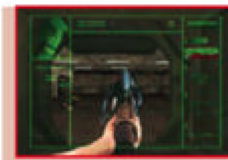
■ As you may have already guessed, *Battlemorph* is the sequel to the first Jaguar game, *Cybermorph*. Released for the Jaguar CD as a launch title, it drastically improves upon the original. The drab, flat polygons of its older sibling are replaced with vibrant texture-mapped examples and the new worlds are far more complex in their nature. Pointless FMV is kept to a minimum and the extra space is utilised for creating vast planets to battle your way across.



MISSILE COMMAND 3D

YEAR: 1995

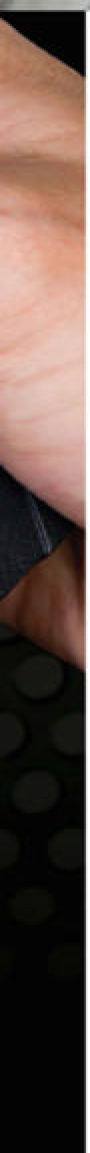
■ This game might have been designed with the Jaguar VR Helmet in mind, but it is every bit as good without it. The VR mode steals the show, a full 3D tour-de-force that views the game from a first-person perspective and requires you to switch between your three bases to take out enemy attack ships and huge bosses. It also throws power-ups into the mix, adding another new element to the tried and tested formula of the original arcade game.



ALIEN VS PREDATOR

YEAR: 1994

■ Often called the Jaguar's 'killer app', *Alien Vs Predator* was the game that put programmers Rebellion on the map. Featuring three game modes where you can play as the Alien, Predator or Colonial Marine it combines elements of survival with those of a traditional FPS to create an engaging and genuinely scary experience. It may have been improved upon by its sequels, but the Jaguar original still holds up very well today.



> **"It was the last machine where someone like Minter could be let loose"** DAVID WIGHTMAN

▶ *Burnout* and *Val D'Isere Skiing And Snowboarding*, they mostly got lost in the mix with the Sony and Sega hype machines in full flow. By now the Jaguar had a, perhaps somewhat unfair, reputation for having bad games. The reality was that it just didn't have enough games and, even more importantly, the games that people wanted to play. Sony was promising 3D texture-mapped worlds, while Sega was offering up conversions of all its hit arcade games.

The final year of the Jaguar's commercial life turned out to be 1996 and the final game released for it by Atari was *Virtua Fighter* clone *Fight For Life* – a game that, while technically impressive, played like a dog. In February of 1996 production of the Jaguar ceased after Atari Corp merged with JT Storage in a reverse take over. This effectively killed off the Jaguar, but we did see one final flurry of games thanks to stalwart third party publishers Telegames. It picked up the rights to a number of finished but unreleased games such as *Iron Soldier 2*, *World Tour Racing*, *Zero 5*, *Towers 2*, *Breakout 2000* and *Worms*. Ironically these actually turned out to be some of the Jaguar best games, the titles it sorely needed back in 1994.

But this is not the end of the Jaguar – not even close! The Jaguar lived on through a hardcore community of fans that didn't just keep interest in the system alive, but who also ensured it had a new life after they – notably aided by *BattleSphere* co-creator Doug Engel – successfully persuaded Hasbro (the then owners of the Atari brand) to release the Jaguar and its encryption keys into the public domain. This essentially allowed Jaguar fans everywhere to start making their own games for the machine, with it inspiring a fledgling homebrew scene that has since flourished with many games having been released on both cartridge and CD. From simple but eminently enjoyable games like *Painter*, *Black Out!* and *Jagmania* to conversions from other systems such as *GORF*, *Impulse X* and *Another World*.



So why should the Jaguar be remembered? "I personally, and fondly, remember the Jaguar as the last machine where programmers were in control of the hardware," offers David Wightman. "It was the last machine where someone like Minter could be let loose to create such mad 'code art' as VLM. The Jaguar never sold in great numbers but I'd like to think of the Jaguar not as a failure, but a bookend to an incredible generation of creativity, where designers, coders and small teams could dream up, program and launch some absolutely wild and wonderful games onto an eager public. What came after the Jaguar was the PlayStation which, for all its greatness, ushered in corporate development and with it the bleached, repetitive, bland titles which we're still playing today."

It's a sentiment Wayne shares, telling us, "It was a bold move at the time from an iconic company who were pushing the boundaries. It could have been great…" If anyone knows why you should consider owning Atari's console it's Shawn Lavery, one of many people still keeping the system alive today. "[It's] the plucky underdog with quirky games that never quite made its potential known," he tells us. Lucky for us then that Shawn and so many other coders are still allowing us to see the Jaguar's potential some 20 years after it was first created.

Special thanks to: Darryl Still, Carl Forhan, Steve Scavone, Fred Gill, Shaun McClure, David Wightman, Wayne Smithson, Stefan Kimmlingen, Shawn Lavery and Jeff Nihlean.

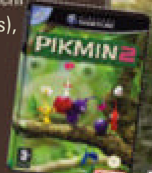
Future Classic

Modern games you'll still be playing in years to come



INFO

- » **Featured System:** GameCube
- » **Year:** 2004
- » **Publisher:** Nintendo
- » **Developer:** Nintendo
- » **Key People:** Shigefumi Hino, Masamichi Abe (directors), Hajimi Wakai (music)



GO DEEPER

- » ***Pikmin*** **was originally created to target a younger Japanese female audience.**
- » **Additional versions of *Pikmin* were created for the 3DS and GBA, before later being scrapped.**

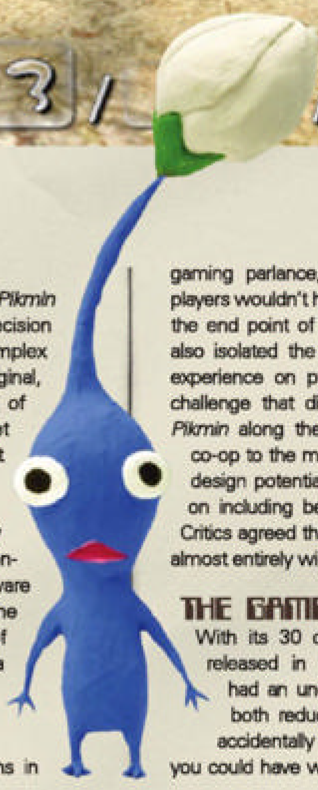
36.



» [Gamecube] *Pikmin 2* had an impressive amount of animations playing out simultaneously on the GameCube, and was certainly one of the console's best-looking games.

PIKMIN 2

Miyamoto's strategy sequel course-corrected the original and is among the most unusually complex titles in Nintendo's back catalogue…



THE BACKGROUND

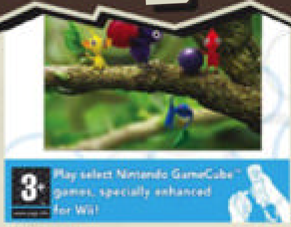
Bringing a second playable character to *Pikmin 2*, besides Olimar, was basically a decision made to challenge users with more complex strategic elements than they had in the original, demanding that they split their groups of little creatures up if they wanted to get the most from the game. The biggest decision made by the developers was removing the time limit on completing the story, and therefore organically allowing a greater focus on exploration-based elements. Nintendo was also aware that some fans weren't all that keen on the structure of the first *Pikmin* – the world of *Pikmin 2* was built to be enjoyed over a long period of time, not something to be quickly progressed through.

These elements were exacerbated by the idea of bringing in caves – dungeons in gaming parlance, of course – that froze time so players wouldn't have to be as conscious of sundown, the end point of *Pikmin*'s gameplay loop. Nintendo also isolated the action adventure elements of the experience on purpose, to provide players with a challenge that didn't allow them to pick up extra *Pikmin* along the way. Nintendo explored bringing co-op to the main game but found it restricted the design potential of the final product, so it decided on including bespoke two-player options instead. Critics agreed that the first instalment's issues were almost entirely wiped out by this richer sequel.

THE GAME

With its 30 day time limit, the original *Pikmin* released in the GameCube's launch window had an uncomfortable sense of urgency that both reduced the lifespan of the game and accidentally limited the amount of fun you felt you could have with it. In *Pikmin 2*, such an obvious

Things of note











New Play Control!

Pikmin 2 was one of a handful of GameCube titles that were ported to the Wii with motion control, which is naturally a perfect match for the strategy game.

Friends and colleagues

You get a lot less done in *Pikmin 2* by keeping Louie and Olimar together, but you do feel more secure about keeping your pikmin together comfortably.

Corporate greed

Perhaps one flaw of *Pikmin 2* is the story, where the stakes basically come down to bailing out your boss due to his financial mismanagement. Where's the sympathy there?

'Product' placement

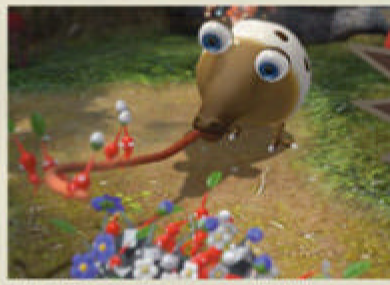
An odd touch to *Pikmin 2* is the addition of product placement involving companies like Coca-Cola and Duracell, where players gather their merchandise as treasure.

Sound ideas

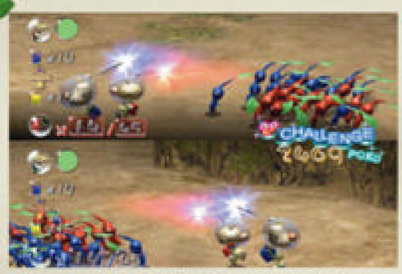
The sound design stays the right side of annoying. Remarkable really, given the amount of cutesy characters on screen – the sound effects never overdo it in bringing the planet to life.



» [Gamecube] While not a massive seller, *Pikmin 2* was one of many titles on the GameCube that had prestige with Nintendo's hardcore.

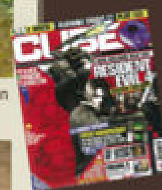


» [Wii U] The series finally returns on Wii U this year, even if the formula was perfected back in 2004.



» [Gamecube] The multiplayer element adds a satisfying additional layer to an already strategic game.

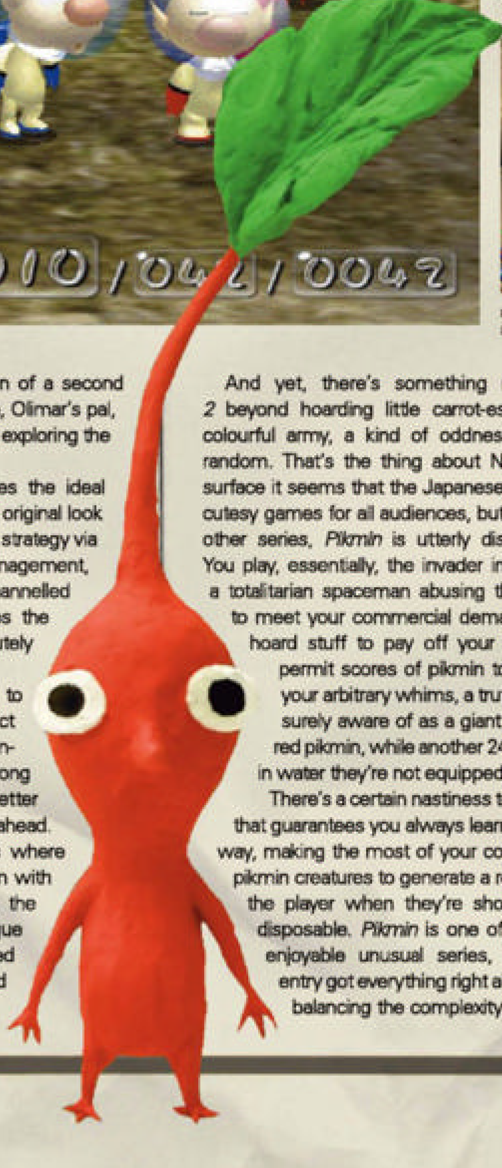
What the press thought



Cube
Score: 9.3/10
"Improving on perfection sounded impossible – it wasn't."



games™
Score: 8/10
"Takes a great game and makes it even better."



flaw was alleviated, while the addition of a second playable character in the form of Louie, Olimar's pal, allowed you greater tactical freedom in exploring the planet and facing encounters.

In many ways, *Pikmin 2* embodies the ideal sequel, a total tune-up that makes the original look like a proof of concept. This is real-time strategy via Miyamoto, with similar resource management, combat and levels of drama – all channelled through a game design that captures the complexity of the genre while absolutely making sense on a console.

The dual protagonists allowed you to accomplish more within *Pikmin*'s strict day cycle, while the addition of poison-resistant white pikmin and mega-strong purple pikmin equipped you to better counter the environmental challenges ahead. The addition of dungeon-style levels where you're stuck with the pikmin you go in with added an almost RPG-like curve to the progression of the game too, a unique combination of elements that shifted your priorities from gathering and expansion to pure survival.

And yet, there's something richer to *Pikmin 2* beyond hoarding little carrot-esque men into a colourful army, a kind of oddness that's far from random. That's the thing about Nintendo – on the surface it seems that the Japanese giant only makes cutesy games for all audiences, but moreso than any other series, *Pikmin* is utterly disturbing at times. You play, essentially, the invader into another world, a totalitarian spaceman abusing the local populace to meet your commercial demands. To help you hoard stuff to pay off your boss's debt, you permit scores of pikmin to perish based on your arbitrary whims, a truth that Nintendo is surely aware of as a giant slug rolls onto 40 red pikmin, while another 24 horrifically drown in water they're not equipped to deal with.

There's a certain nastiness to it, a creepy edge that guarantees you always learn lessons the hard way, making the most of your connection with the pikmin creatures to generate a real response from the player when they're shown to be utterly disposable. *Pikmin* is one of Nintendo's more enjoyable unusual series, and this second entry got everything right about the template, balancing the complexity of managing two characters with an increased range of powers in the form of your small friends. As gorgeous as the new, Wii U third installment is, *Pikmin 2* already took Miyamoto's series to its peak.

WHY IT'S A FUTURE CLASSIC

Pikmin 2 is one of those rare examples of a perfect videogame sequel, isolating the strengths of the original and expanding the scope of its design in all the right ways. As one of Nintendo's more unusual series, *Pikmin 2* maintains that accessibility we expect from the company's games and mixes it with one of the most hardcore, PC-centric genres there is.

Yet *Pikmin 2* doesn't label itself a strategy game, instead using the idea that you're essentially playing as the cursor in the form of Olimar and Louie, marshalling your troops in a way that allows it to cross over into other types of games. The adventure elements of *Pikmin 2* were an effective addition, letting the almost brilliant nature of the original become something more than a finite framework for an essential game. As a franchise, *Pikmin* will no doubt keep rolling, yet there's such an ideal balance of complexity and variety in *Pikmin 2* that we're sure that this effort will remain the benchmark of the series.



Counter Strike

FROM THE INSTANT POPULARITY AS A MOD TO ITS STATUS AS ONE OF THE MOST CONSISTENTLY PLAYED GAMES ON STEAM, ADAM BARNES SPEAKS TO ORIGINAL COUNTER-STRIKE CREATOR MINH LE ABOUT HOW THE MOD CAME TO BE

Many pick *Quake* or *Doom* as the forefathers of the modern FPS but, while the pair certainly popularised the genre, it's impossible to deny *Counter-Strike* its rightful place as the true inspiration for *Call Of Duty* and the rest of its modern shooter stablemates. *Counter-Strike* took multiplayer twitch shooting to a whole new level, but stepped away from the typical aliens and Nazis that often plagued FPS games. It may have only been a mod, but it changed the games industry forever.

"I came up with the idea for *Counter-Strike* from my fascination with terrorism and the various ways in which it's fought across the globe," original mod creator Minh Le told us. While admitting there was a touch of Tom Clancy behind his inspiration, Minh added that it was really the way in which counter-terrorism battles were fought that really intrigued him. "I was fascinated with how counter-terrorist units operate and how sophisticated their training and weaponry is. I felt it would make a great game if I could capture that sense of teamwork and co-ordination that real CT units exhibit."

Though the game has since evolved over the years, *Counter-Strike* has always been heavily focused on teamwork. Even now, its more modern equivalents – such as the recent Valve released *Counter-Strike: Global Offensive* – remain popular choices for eSports tournaments across the globe, and you can't manage record-breaking player counts without the necessary depth of teamplay. But it wasn't simple; building the mod alone as a student, Minh spent about two years putting together the initial version of the mod that was eventually released in June 1999.



» [PC] As the most recognisable Counter-Strike map to date, de_dust has an iconic look that makes it a firm favourite with many fans of the game.

WE NEVER ONCE BOUGHT AN AD"

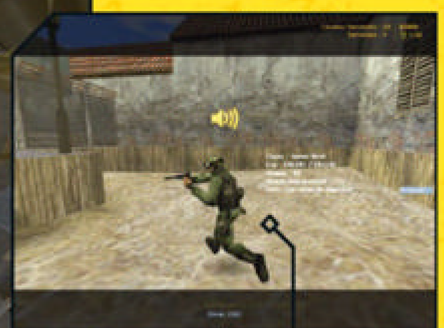
MINH LE

WHAT HAPPENED TO COUNTER STRIKE 2?

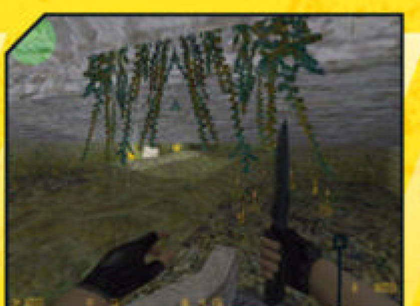
It was on and off for years, but no one really knows what happened to the *Counter-Strike* sequel, despite the 2012 release of *Counter-Strike: Global Offensive*. With all the years of development behind *CS2*, surely Valve didn't just cancel it? "Valve didn't cancel it per se," said Minh. "I simply didn't have anything substantial to show them that I felt could be the start of *Counter-Strike 2*. A lot of my time at Valve was spent learning the Source engine which wasn't finished until several years after I had joined." Minh Le was having to develop the game alongside the creation of Valve's most important set of software before Steam – understandably a challenge for him. "Working on an unfinished engine was probably not the best idea for me to establish a base for *CS2*," said Minh, "as I had a hard time implementing certain features because the engine was constantly evolving."



» [PC] Many maps were fan creations, which Minh had to approve before they were added to the final game.



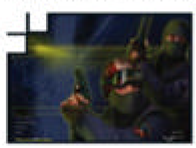
» [PC] Killcams gave birth to teabagging long before Halo popularised it.



» [PC] Subtle tactics such as carrying a knife – meaning you had a faster running speed – are what separated *Counter-Strike* from a lot of similar games.

"Since it was my first time working with the *Half-Life* engine I had a hard time learning the ins and outs," he explains. "The first version was fairly lightweight and didn't contain a whole lot of new features. It consisted of one mission mode, which was hostage rescue. It also had two character models, which many people complained about since they looked far too similar. The arsenal consisted of around six guns and had, I believe, three maps." Slimline it was, but that didn't stop the gamers taking to it in droves. After a fair amount of pre-release interest on Planet Half-Life, the release of the initial version of *Counter-Strike* was met with instant popularity. But what caused such a flood of fans? "I think it came at a time where there was nothing out there quite like it," claims Minh. "It had fast-paced yet rewarding teamplay; it had an element of progression – ie buying higher powered guns; it had a very appealing theme that was very well ingrained in people's minds – ie real-world terrorist units versus counter-terrorists. I think having such an appealing theme made it easier to resonate with players."

This was long before the popularity of *Call Of Duty* and *Battlefield*; back then the concept of using a current day real-world setting in an FPS was fairly novel. Nonetheless, the eagerness of the fanbase meant that work on *Counter-Strike* would need to increase. Minh Le and his small subset of modders had a demanding player base to keep content. "It was extremely gratifying and it motivated everyone to work on the project more. At the time, I was actually still enrolled in my final years of university and I was finding it difficult to balance my schoolwork with that of developing *Counter-Strike*. I believe I spent more time working on *CS* and it kind of affected my grades." Minh's grades may have taken a knock due to the popularity of *Counter-Strike*, but that didn't mean he didn't value his creative freedom in control of the mod.



IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** SIERRA STUDIOS/VALVE CORPORATION
- » **DEVELOPER:** VALVE CORPORATION
- » **RELEASED:** 1999
- » **PLATFORM:** PC, MAC, XBOX, LINUX
- » **GENRE:** FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER

"I found it very enjoyable being in charge of so many aspects of *CS*," he continues. "It made it so much easier to develop because I never had to argue with anyone. I was responsible for game design, programming and the creation of the characters and the guns." Though Minh Le was in charge of almost all of the development, he did have others helping him out. Jesse Cliffe is the other main name associated with original mod, a man who later became known as 'the voice of *Counter-Strike*'. "Cliffe was responsible for our website and community relations. He also helped out with the sound effects by recording a lot of the voices you hear in the game."

The beauty of *Counter-Strike*'s development, however, was that it relied so heavily on fellow players and modders. Though the ▶



» [PC] Other strategies included saving your money from the first round to purchase more powerful equipment quickly during the second.



» [PC] Hostage Rescue was the first mode to be added, though Team Deathmatch is the most popular these days.



» [PC] If you didn't play as part of a team then you were often chastised - regular *Counter-Strike* players hated losing because of a newcomer.



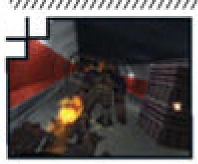
» [PC] *Counter-Strike: Source* reworked the mod for Valve's Source engine, sprucing up the visuals without changing the deep gameplay.



» [PC] Maps weren't very much to look at, but were considered important tools in 'pro' team games.

barebones mechanics and models were all Minh Le's creations, additional content was just as often added via user submissions. "All of the levels were developed by people from our community. They would submit levels to us and Cliffe and I would evaluate them and pick the ones we liked and included those in each of our beta versions. It was a difficult task to pick just a few levels because we were getting some fantastic levels throughout the course of development, and I felt there were some that we never gave enough exposure to."

It was a kind of perfect storm for Minh Le and *Counter-Strike*. The popularity of multiplayer was on the rise due to it becoming increasingly simple to develop internet-connected games on PC, while *Half-Life* had managed to build a group of enthusiastic gamers and fans outside of the big names in multiplayer PC gaming. Meanwhile, the thematic direction of *Counter-Strike* offered gamers something completely new. "It did in fact come out before such things as Twitter, Facebook etc existed. I think back then there were only a few sites where hardcore gamers would go to get their news. I think this helped in a sense that, once *CS* started to become popular, it spread to these few news sites and grew quite quickly because the majority of our players came from these few sites." Could a mod like *Counter-Strike* reach the same level of popularity in our industry today, with our multitude of social networks and means of connection? "These days," believes Minh, "there are just so many different sources of media and ways in which people can get their news that it becomes a bit difficult to get the word out, as I feel having so many different gaming sites has caused the players to scatter. As far as our involvement in helping get the word out, the only thing we did was make the game. The popularity grew organically. We never once bought an ad."



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

HALF-LIFE
(PICTURED)
SYSTEM: PC, PS2, MAC, LINUX
YEAR: 1998

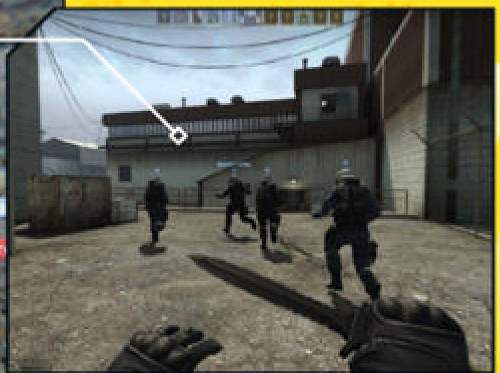
PORTAL
SYSTEM: PC, MAC, LINUX, XBOX 360, PS3
YEAR: 2007

LEFT 4 DEAD
SYSTEM: PC, MAC, XBOX 360
YEAR: 2008

With that said, it'd be foolish for Minh Le and company to not benefit from the considerable success of the mod. The *Counter-Strike* website was understandably getting a lot of traffic and, as a result, Minh could enjoy financial gain while making a game that would – ultimately – cost players nothing. "Actually, at the time we were getting *a lot* of revenue from the ads on our website," he continues. "It was a time when ad agencies were throwing money around like crazy and we happened to get caught in it. I remember when the 'dotcom' boom happened and investors started to take money out of the industry – our ad revenues took a hit. It was a wild and crazy time and I was fortunate to be a part of it, if only for a few years."

The initial June 1999 release of *Counter-Strike* wasn't the end though and, before long, updates were brought to the game. It





» [PC] *Counter-Strike: Global Offensive* was developed without Minh's assistance, but retained a lot of the depth of the original mod.

"IT WAS A WILD AND CRAZY TIME AND I WAS FORTUNATE TO BE A PART OF IT"

MINH LE



» [PC] Knowing the map was important since many of them had alternative routes to exploit.



» [PC] Nowadays, *Counter-Strike: Source* is the preferred option for many, leaving only a handful of quiet servers running on the original mod.

was still beta, after all, and the game had to be completed. Minh Le and Jesse Cliffe sold the rights to *Counter-Strike* to Valve in 2000, with the game leaving beta in November 2000. But that wasn't the end of Minh's work on *Counter-Strike*.

"I was actually working at a company called Barking Dog at the time who hired me because of my work on *Counter-Strike*," he explains. "We were doing some work on another game and Valve approached them to contract out *CS* Beta 5. While I was at Barking Dog, I worked with them to develop Beta 5, which included some new maps and a few new guns. After that, I was offered a job at Valve and continued to work on *Counter-Strike* with Valve. I worked on *Counter-Strike* up until *CS* 1.0 and, at that point, I stopped to begin work on a potential new *Counter-Strike* title." Though Minh Le spent very little time at Valve's offices – it was a three-hour drive from his home, after all – he did spend a few months at Valve. "I did feel a bit intimidated by all the talent that was there. I remember, on occasion, having talks with some of the senior programmers and not really understanding a damn thing, merely just nodding my head as if to convey a sense of awareness."

Counter-Strike trundled onto its final version of 1.6, but all the while Minh was at work on the much-anticipated *Counter-Strike 2* as it was built alongside Valve's then-upcoming game engine Source, the tools behind *Half-Life 2*. *CS2* never did come to fruition – with Minh Le leaving when Valve shelved the project to work on a development studio of his own. As it turns out, however, the industry didn't need the sequel; even to this day *Counter-Strike* remains in the top ten most played games on Steam *every month*, and it shows no signs of letting up. Not bad for a mod released 15 years ago.

THE MOD SQUAD

Five Other Important PC Mods

TEAM FORTRESS

RELEASED: AUGUST 1999

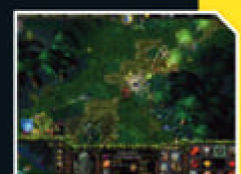
Many forget that *Team Fortress* first began as a mod to id Software's Quake engine, but after Valve bought out the development team behind the game it was then ported over to GoldSrc – the engine that powered *Half-Life*. The rest is history and, now, *Team Fortress 2* is one of Valve's most important franchises, ushering in the popularity of free-to-play gaming and building a set of characters and story events that gamers really seem to get behind.



DEFENSE OF THE ANCIENTS

RELEASED: JUNE 2003

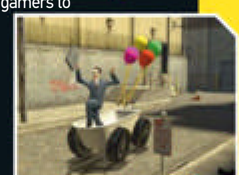
Counter-Strike was important for shaping modern FPS games, but few mods can claim to have built a whole new genre. *Defense Of The Ancients* – or *DOTA*, as it's more commonly known – was a mod for Blizzard's *Warcraft III* that pit a set of player heroes against one another as they aim to destroy one another's base. Nowadays, this type of game is more typically known as MOBA, or multiplayer online battle arena, with *League Of Legends* the most popular of the lot.



GARRY'S MOD

RELEASED: NOVEMBER 2006

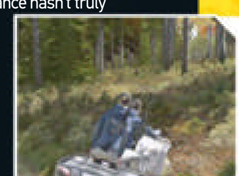
This mod, built on Valve's Source tools, actually enables gamers to create their own mods within the physics-focused game engine. The freeform creativity it offered its players was unsurprisingly appealing to a large number of people, and the mod was downloaded in the thousands. Nowadays, it's a staple of almost everyone's Steam library and has boosted its creator – Garry Newman – into the spotlight as one of the most important industry figures.



DAYZ

RELEASED: MAY 2012

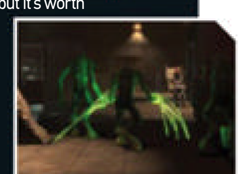
One of the most recent mods on this list, *DayZ*'s importance hasn't truly been realised just yet. The *ARMA II* mod had a recent upsurge in popularity with the unique zombie survival game spreading across various social networks. As a result of its popularity, however, more and more open world zombie survival games – specifically those that focus on realism – have been announced. Expect *DayZ* to have created a whole new genre in years to come.



BLACK MESA

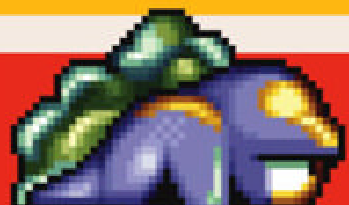
RELEASED: SEPTEMBER 2012

Valve's Source engine has proved popular with modders, but it's worth mentioning *Black Mesa* as an example of some of the greatness modders can achieve with time and effort. By remaking *Half-Life*, the team behind *Black Mesa* did more than just plaster everything in the HD textures of *Half-Life 2* – they rebuilt the whole game from scratch. It was met with considerable praise, and we can only hope more classics get an equivalent Source treatment.



Minority Report

Platformers found on lesser-known systems and obscure examples of the genre developed for more popular machines are often unfairly overlooked. Rory Milne raises the profiles of a few great platform games that you may be missing out on



THE APPRENTICE

■ SYSTEM: PHILIPS CD-I ■ DEVELOPER: SPC VISION ■ YEAR: 1994

» PHILIPS CD-I



»[Philips CD-i] Swimming to the bottom of the castle's well while in frog form.

■ **Dutch outfit SPC Vision produced a number of standout titles for Philips' ill-fated entertainment system, but *The Apprentice* is arguably its greatest achievement on the platform. Each of *The Apprentice*'s richly coloured, highly detailed levels consists of three main stages, a boss stage and a bonus stage, which take place in a magical castle. Here, a wizard sets the player's character – a loyal and long-suffering apprentice – a series of highly dangerous tasks.**

The Apprentice is a challenging vertically scrolling platformer, where your objective is to scale the heights of a sequence of themed towers: Medieval, Hi-Tech, Arctic and Deserted. But, in an entertaining twist, you're turned into a frog on the second level and made to swim to the bottom of the castle's well. Then, in the title's finale, you're given a propeller-powered helmet in order to reach the top of the castle's Toy Tower. All levels, though, require you to raise inconveniently located flags and collect awkwardly placed items – such as keys and fish – to pass corresponding obstacles – like doors and whales. While doing this, you also have to avoid enchanted weaponry and a nightmarish assortment of antagonists, which are noteworthy for the inventiveness and attention to detail that's been lavished on them. A problem CD-ROMs initially gave developers was how to fill them; in this case, the solution was a bewildering array of adversaries. Opponents range from monstrosities found on the boss stages – a mechanised cat, a missile-toting schoolgirl – through to main stage lieutenants like fire-breathing gargoyles and axe-wielding pumpkin people. However, to level the playing field slightly you're provided with a variety of useful defences. Bows and arrows and laser-equipped football helmets prove particularly useful in a tight spot, as do invincibility spells and guardian angels.



On the platforming levels you negotiate genre staples

» SEGA 32X

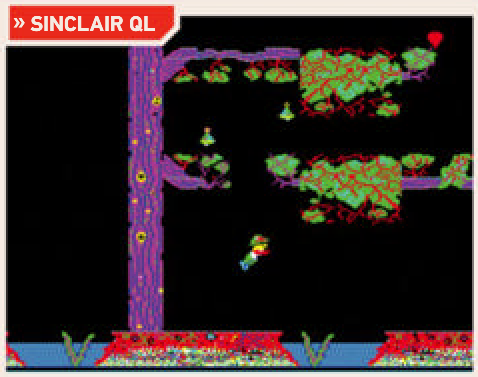


» TEMPO

■ SYSTEM: SEGA 32X
■ DEVELOPER: SEGA ENTERPRISES / RED ENTERTAINMENT ■ YEAR: 1995

■ ***Tempo* is like** a surreal re-imagining of an American game show where the player takes the starring role. You have seven music-themed performances to give, with your direction being to jump and karate kick your way to an end of level exit. Once there, a crazy sprite-scaling boss awaits you. Aside from martial arts, you can snap musical notes from your fingers at the game's weird and wonderful opponents. *Tempo* is due praise for its eye-catching animation, character graphics and backdrops – but its main draw is solid platforming.

» SINCLAIR QL



» JUNGLE EDDI

■ SYSTEM: SINCLAIR QL
■ DEVELOPER: GRAFSOFT ■ YEAR: 1986

■ **Despite first impressions,** *Jungle Eddi* is original and not just *Underwurlde* with tweaked visuals. As its name would suggest, the game is set within a jungle, where your task is to uncover a series of five hidden doors. Each door leads to ever more densely wooded and dangerously populated locations. Insects and birds bounce you about as you leap perilously from branch to branch, while contact with larger predators or plunging into the swamp below causes instant death. Thankfully, extra lives can be collected, but this only makes your challenge slightly less demanding. Frustrating, but hard to put down.

» BBC MICRO



» HUNKIDORY

■ SYSTEM: BBC MICRO
■ DEVELOPER: PETER SCOTT ■ YEAR: 1986

■ **Peter Scott's sterling** efforts on the BBC tend to meet three simple criteria: cute sprites, primary colours and rock hard gameplay! This is no exception, but its brightly hued antagonists do at least move in predictable patterns. Apart from avoiding the game's many dangers, you also have to collect ten valves per level by guiding your spherical android across assorted walkways and floating platforms. You can activate a shield that destroys opponents on contact, but usage quickly depletes your time gauge. Besides, finding the one safe route through each level is what gives *Hunkidory* its long-term appeal.



»[Philips CD-i] A leap of faith to reach a pneumatic tube in the Hi-Tech Tower.

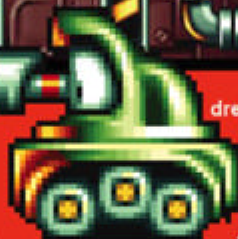


»[Philips CD-i] Taking very careful aim at an axe-wielding pumpkin person.



» ABOUT THE SYSTEM

- The Philips CD-i arrived three years late, giving a head start to rival CD-ROM based gaming platforms.
- The system was overpriced, underpowered, exhibited glitches and lacked launch games, which further damaged its chances.
- Despite its shortcomings, a few developers delivered some genuine classics on the platform.



like elevators and conveyer belts, but also more exotic contraptions like pneumatic tubes and pinball springs, which require lateral thinking and pixel-perfect leaping. The Well and Toy Tower levels, conversely, are more maze-like, with tight spaces to get in and out of. What these stages all have in common, however, are their infuriating difficulty spikes, which act as bottlenecks to smooth progress. In fairness, these spikes are purely tests of skill – with every death attributable to a lapse in concentration – and each is overcome by the perfect timing that comes with repeated play. The game's bonus stages are coin collecting affairs which take place in the apprentice's dreams as he sleeps between levels. Its boss stages are hit and run based set pieces. Special mention should be made of the title's playful soundtrack and comical sound effects, since they add so much to the game. The hilarious noises your character makes when losing a life are a particular highlight.

The Apprentice's style, beautiful backdrops and accomplished score make it most easily comparable to *Castle Of Illusion*. But, while it matches the sublime visuals and polished presentation of the Sega classic, it doesn't share its high standing. Due to the platform it appeared on, *The Apprentice* lacks the reputation it deserves, but its stunning visuals and compulsive gameplay mark it out as worthy of reassessment.



»[Philips CD-i] Facing down a toy tank with a laser-equipped football helmet.

» SUPER CASSETTE VISION

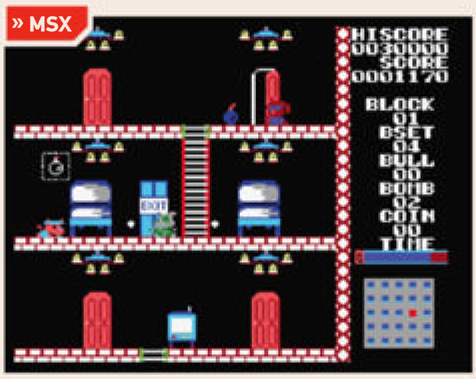


» ELEVATOR FIGHT

■ SYSTEM: SUPER CASSETTE VISION
■ DEVELOPER: EPOCH ■ YEAR: 1984

■ **Epoch is better** known for developing electronic games such as *Astro Wars*, but it was also a big player in the early Japanese console market before its Super Cassette Vision lost out to the Famicom. *Elevator Fight* is clearly influenced by *Elevator Action* but, although it takes its starting point from Taito's coin-op, it successfully introduces a sci-fi B-movie setting and high-tech gadgetry to the mix. The run, jump and shoot formula is left intact but electronic winches, key collection and a tricky end sequence save it from being derivative. Just as impressively, its difficulty level has been gauged almost perfectly.

» MSX

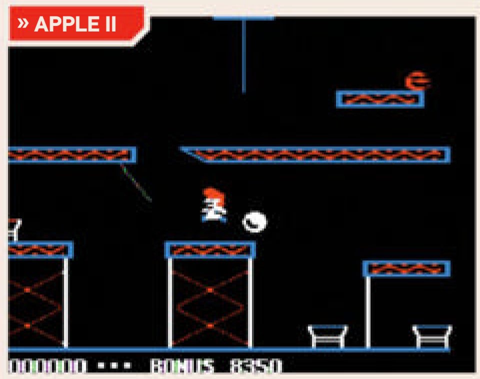


» BULL AND MIGHTY'S SLIM CHANCE

■ SYSTEM: MSX
■ DEVELOPER: HAL LABORATORY ■ YEAR: 1986

■ ***Bull And Mighty's** Slim Chance* sets the player the task of defusing bombs in apartments throughout a city. Each one has several floors connected by ladders, with each floor having to be cleared before a new apartment can be tackled. Sections of the apartment floors collapse and deadly ceiling fans have been mounted at head height, but your main cause for concern should be that the bombers haven't left the buildings, and they're armed! Although the game's visuals are certainly a high point, its main accomplishment is mixing platformer and shoot-'em-up elements together so successfully.

» APPLE II



» SAMMY LIGHTFOOT

■ SYSTEM: APPLE II
■ DEVELOPER: WARREN SCHWADER ■ YEAR: 1983

■ **Due to the** Apple II's limited colour palette, your character appears to be naked apart from a pair of blue socks and a huge ginger toupee – that must have been some party! Humorous back stories aside, the platforming offered by the game is no laughing matter, being that it's strictly old school. Stand still too long or mistime a jump and you're dead. Die four times and it's game over. The game's smooth animation sequences are also worthy of a mention – like when your character dies and his imposing hairpiece does a 360 degree spin – but the title's demanding gameplay is reason enough to recommend it.



SANDY WHITE

Sandy White brought giant ants, zombies and polygons to the Spectrum. He takes Paul Drury on a tour of Antescher, introduces him to Dick Special and leaves him sweating in leatherwear

Building on his background in art, sculpture and fiddling with circuit boards, Sandy created the revolutionary 'softsolid' 3D engine, introducing a whole new perspective to Spectrum gamers. *Ant Attack* remains his masterpiece, and classics that followed – from *Knightlore* to *Head Over Heels* – owe a debt to its pioneering spirit. His next two titles, *Zombie Zombie* and *I, Of The Mask*, were just as ground-breaking, if much less commercially successful – the former giving players the chance to redesign their own city in real-time and the latter introducing 3D polygons to Sinclair's humble machine. He currently lives and works in Scotland and has just become a father for the first time. Baby Emma, when you grow up, we hope you read this article and find out about the wonders your dad created back in the Eighties



It's been 30 years since it was released and people like us are still asking you about *Ant Attack*. Are you thoroughly sick of talking about it?
You go through phases of liking it and not liking it. At the moment, I'm so happy with life in general that I'm loving every minute of it! Like Leonard Nimoy, I've been through my 'I am not Spock' phase and entered my 'I *am* Spock' phase. It's as well to go with it. I'm the author of several ancient games and I'm happy with that!

When did you first encounter the emerging world of computers?
It was around 1973. At school, if you were awfully good at proper maths, you got a Friday afternoon at the end of class using punch cards. These things would be taken off to the local technical college which actually had a computer, maybe the only one within 20 miles of Falkirk, where I went to school. Two weeks later, you'd get a card back with your results! But the real frustration for me was I got so little time doing that because I was so bad at maths.

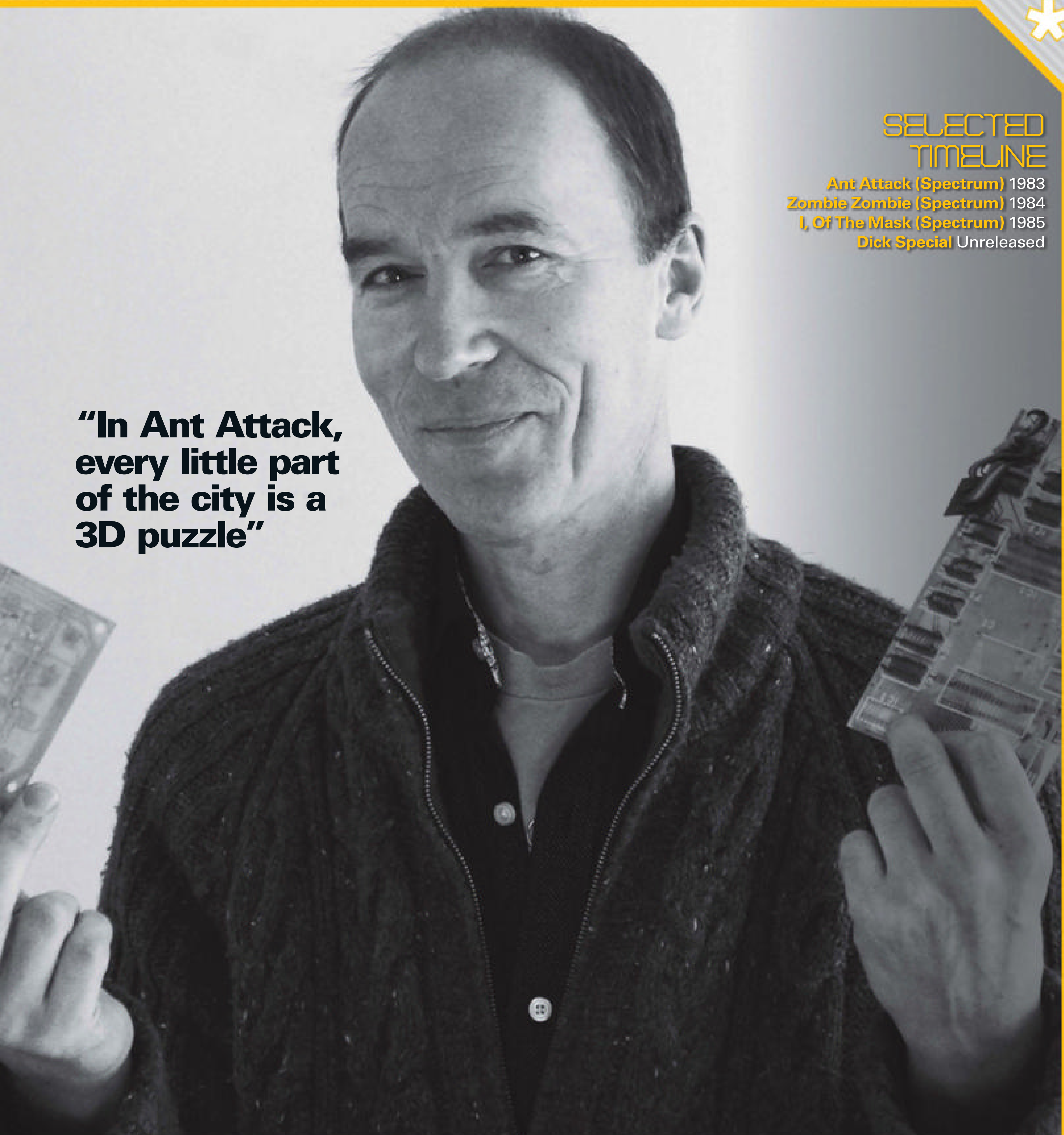
Is that why you went on to study art after leaving school?
Art was easy for me and my dad was an art teacher. I got to the end of sixth form and felt lost. One of my art teachers said, 'Right you're going to art college'. I'm forever grateful. I would've just farted around not doing anything.

You studied sculpture, but it sounds like your work was more Heath Robinson than Henry Moore.
[laughs] That was almost exactly what the head of the sculpture department said to me! He'd actually been one of Henry Moore's assistants. That's what the school of sculpture focussed on, the human figure and work that fitted in with the landscape. Then along came me. I was building things with microprocessors, these miniature operas. For my degree show I wrote a five-minute long piece of music with a little story, light bulbs as actors on a very simple set, which moved around in synchronisation with the music I'd written. I've seen people really moved by these things.

It sounds like you were trying to put human emotion into electronic circuits, something you went on to do with games.
Yes, I saw no great difference when I was writing my first Spectrum game with what I'd done previously.

And you were actually building the machines yourself, too!
Before I went to art college, I'd built a TV tennis game. You could buy the chip and make it yourself, like hobbyist electronics. So, when I heard about Sinclair's MK14, I ordered one with great excitement. £39.99 for a computer! A week later, I was camping by the letterbox… but this was Sinclair. Six months later, during my first year at art college, a little brown package arrived. That was an exciting day, second only to when I got my *Blue Peter* badge. It came with a letter and paw prints from Patch and Petra… [NB – That's the badge, not the MK14]

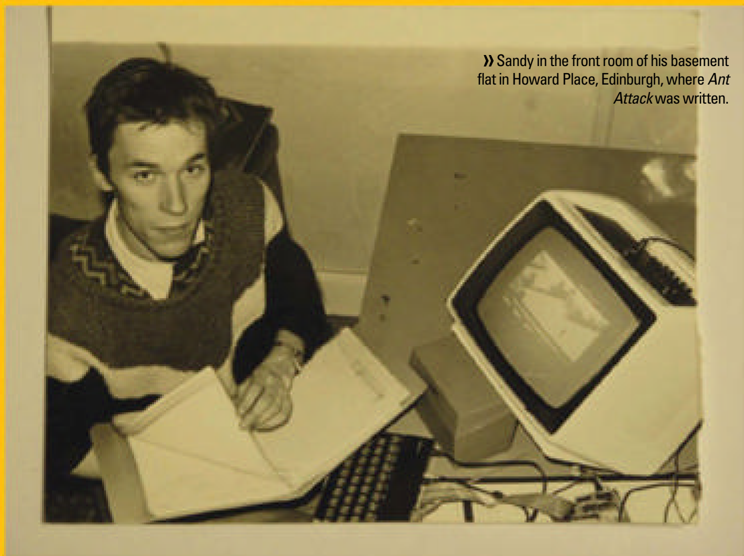
Once you'd built the MK14, could you actually do much with it?
If you stand back and look at it now, no. It doesn't do anything very useful. It had a little calculator display and you could type in a list of numbers



SELECTED TIMELINE

Ant Attack (Spectrum) 1983
Zombie Zombie (Spectrum) 1984
I, Of The Mask (Spectrum) 1985
Dick Special Unreleased

"In Ant Attack, every little part of the city is a 3D puzzle"



» Sandy in the front room of his basement flat in Howard Place, Edinburgh, where *Ant Attack* was written.

and use the keys to scroll back and forward. They were still there! That was magical to me, but I still didn't get how it all worked. Then I had an epiphany. I remember going: 'Shit, I know how it's doing this! I can make it make decisions and follow different paths.' I jumped out of the bath, naked, and ran down the street shouting 'eureka'. No wait, that was Archimedes… but I did want to collar everyone and say, this is amazing!

After graduating from art college, you had a one man show in Aberdeen. Did you contemplate becoming a full-time artist?
That was the plan! But that very summer I started writing *Ant Attack* and got swept up in that, lost in this exciting and glamorous world. I remember telling people, 'yeah, yeah, I'm just doing this for the moment, I'm an artist and I'll be doing sculpture again shortly.' It never happened. People kept saying, 'do computer games, you'll be a millionaire in two years!'

You began developing the 'softsolid' 3D technique that would power *Ant Attack* on an Acorn Atom, we understand.
At college, I had my degree show and lots of people were interested in how my stuff worked. A local businessman asked if I was interested in writing some code for a project he was working on. I was a student – I was broke – so I said 'fine'. He had an Acorn Atom connected to a very early modem which you could use to access Prestel. That was the first computer I got my paws on that actually had graphics.

Did you build an early version of Antescher on the Atom?
I was writing in BASIC and I could draw a cube. I put in a loop and got them scattered over the screen. As the cubes landed on top of each other, it started to look three dimensional, like Lego bricks thrown on the floor. I adjusted the code so they appeared to stack and suddenly I was seeing cities appear and disappear in front of my eyes. I felt like I was in another place, like I'd been transported into some other land. That was very intriguing.

Were you thinking game or art project at this stage?
A bit of both. I credit my brother for saying, 'You could make that into a game!' I must have taken up the gauntlet. My brother and dad were into home computers and they'd just got a Spectrum. When I had to give the Atom back they said I should get one myself to help me recover.

Were you playing games yourself?
I'd seen *The Hobbit* and *Hungry Horace* on the Spectrum and *Galaxian* in the arcade, so I was aware of them. They were there in the background of my mind. I'm sure I played *Zaxxon* so I had seen isometric graphics, even though, at the time, I convinced myself I'd invented them! I wasn't emulating anything… it was a spontaneous discovery. I was in my own world. I still am! Because I'd been making sculptures using microprocessors, I just saw the Spectrum as a circuit board with a Z80 on it. I wired it to another computer with a ROM emulator and hardwired it into the back of the Spectrum.

You modded your own Spectrum?

Yeah, I wasn't actually using the Spectrum to develop the game on. For the techies out there, I mapped 4k of the Spectrum's address space into an EPROM emulator called a Softy, which was manufactured by Dataman.

Did you begin by drawing the city of Antescher on paper?
We've all seen the map now as a complete entity, but I'd only ever seen it through the window on my Spectrum. It wasn't until *Your Spectrum* published the map that I saw the city in that iconic form. I think I helped them by doing yards of print out on that aluminium paper the Sinclair printer used. I can still remember the taste of metal in the air.

* THREE TO PLAY

We examine Sandy's classic trio of Speccy classics

ANT ATTACK



SANDY'S SPECTRUM DEBUT was not only a huge critical and commercial success, it broke a lot of new ground. Using his innovative 'Softsolid' 3D engine he built the strange and beautiful city of Antescher, allowing boys *and* girls to explore its architecture and brave its army of giant ants. In popularising the isometric viewpoint he ushered in a new approach to creating expansive game worlds, and the whole 'rescue mission' premise of *Ant Attack* has become a staple. The only ant in the ointment is the complexity of the controls. By introducing ranged grenade attacks, the game uses a total of 12 keys and, as most gamers only have ten fingers, it can be a challenge to repel your insect pursuers.

ZOMBIE ZOMBIE



IF SOME HAVE hailed *Ant Attack* as the first 'survival horror' title, *Zombie Zombie* certainly underlines the point by introducing the undead to Sandy's isometric city. Disposing of them is a strange affair as, despite being armed with a gun, this only stuns your shambling foes. Instead, you must entice them to follow you and lure them up high structures so they fall to their deaths. It's a gameplay concept that sounds much better on paper than it actually is in practice, as Sandy is the first to admit. However, his pioneering spirit is again in evidence by allowing players to pilot a helicopter, pick up blocks and create whole new structures… Or at least spell out rude words in 3D.

I, OF THE MASK



THE LEAST KNOWN of Sandy's trio of titles, it's the one most likely to make you say, 'he was doing what in the Eighties?!' Yes, this really does have a 3D polygon engine running on the Spectrum in 1985. Watching your little avatar dash down corridors, turning corners at speed and assembling an imposing robot – a dead ringer for *Star Fox*'s Andross – it's hard not to be impressed. It's even easier to be bewildered. The crystals you collect can either transport you to another part of the labyrinth you're in, whisk you off to another of the 32 mazes or provide you with a robot body part, which you must assemble in a specific order. This is best viewed as a technical triumph, we're afraid.

We like the names you gave to city locations, especially Adriant's Wall and Droxtrap, which we presume are a nod to your Scottish heritage.
Most of the names came afterwards for that *Your Spectrum* poster and a lot of it was Angela's [Sutherland – Sandy's girlfriend and collaborator on his Spectrum games] wicked sense of humour. We had an enormous laugh doing them. It was a joint effort. When I look back on it all now, it seems an enormous adventure and she was part of that adventure. I can't tell those stories without it being about two people, not one.

Is it true that the game originally featured Superman?
Yes, but he didn't get to do much more than fly over the city. You could change his height and fly through windows but he didn't get to land. To quote my friend Jon Ritman, 'So, you had Superman flying over a 3D city, around the same year the film hit the cinemas and you didn't turn that into a game? Duh!' He's quite right – it should have been a Superman game!

So when did all the ants arrive in the city?
The herding behaviour came first. They were just black blobs, which grew legs and became ants almost by osmosis. There's not much you can do with 16x16 pixels and no shades of grey. The ants might well have turned into sheep. Sheep Attack? Sounds a bit Minter-ish, doesn't it?

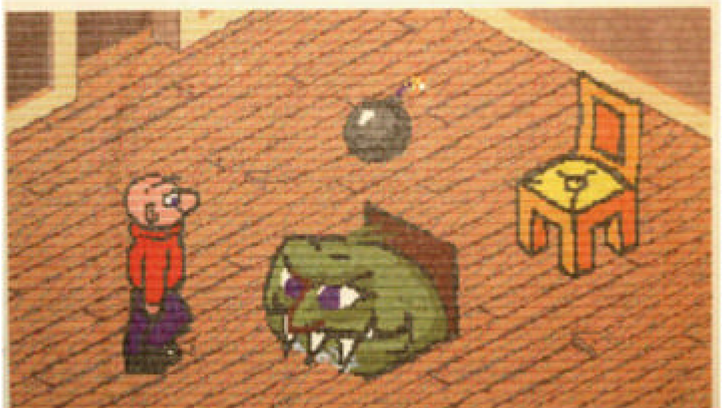
You can play as a boy or girl in *Ant Attack*. Was this a product of Dworkian feminist thinking of the time or just to keep your girlfriend and co-author Angela happy?
It was zeitgeist. It didn't seem like I was making a statement at the time and I was surprised people commented on it and still do! I imagined girls would be playing it. I didn't know what the demographics were! We know now it was mainly boys but, back then, I think no-one would've known who was buying stuff. It must've taken the industry a while to work out their target market. There's been lots written about Ant Attack being 'the first non-sexist game', which I never expected.



» This Casio keyboard was used to work out the notes for the music in Sandy's games. The Jaffa cakes were used to power his brain.

> " The ants in Ant Attack could easily have become sheep. Sheep Attack? Sounds a bit Minter-ish, doesn't it? "

To be fair, you can see the girl's knickers when she jumps and you made her boobs wobble when she's running…
Feminists have boobs! And feminists have a sense of humour too. I found it funny and I don't think I've met anyone offended by them. And they were very small… I mean, we're only talking about a couple of pixels.



» A **Retro Gamer** exclusive – sketches and screens from Sandy's unreleased Amiga title, *Dick Special*.

You initially approached Sinclair in the hope that they might publish *Ant Attack*.
I actually sent them a videotape so they couldn't steal my code. My family is replete with anecdotes of uncles that invented the serrated knife or the automatic cheese flap or whatever, but never got rich because they were ripped off by some company. I was determined not to fall into that folly. Sinclair sent me a rejection letter saying they didn't have a video recorder so couldn't view it and suggested I take it elsewhere.

You took it to Quicksilva who launched the game at the PCW Show at the Barbican in late 1983. Can you recall how the game was received back then?
There were a few games being shown to the press, and I remember an intake of breath when *Ant Attack* came on and people going, 'is that really running on a Spectrum?' I don't think anyone had a name for that style of graphics. My little fantasy is that if I'd gone 'that's Softsolid' instead of saying it was isometric, that might have stuck. I think that was the first time 'isometric' was used by the gaming press, so I suppose I helped put it into the lexicon. Mind you, I used to think I'd actually *invented* isometric games, which I can't really claim after *Zaxxon*. I *did* invent zombie games, though. I was only told that last year!



» [Spectrum] *Ant Attack* was Sandy's iconic debut and continues to inspire remakes to this day.



» [Spectrum] *I, Of The Mask* was a technical marvel but a far from satisfying game…

Yes, you literally went from A to Z by following *Ant Attack* with *Zombie Zombie* the next year. Did you not consider a straight sequel?
My first game was a tremendous effort, the tools I had were rubbish, I was exhausted by the process and I didn't have the energy to do something drastically different – but I wanted to create something new. That's what interests me. I didn't want to just crank something out, and it ended up being a compromise of reusing the graphics and engine but influenced by George A Romero and *Night Of The Living Dead*. And Michael Jackson was doing zombies!

The game has this very original mechanic in that you have to lure the zombies up high buildings and get them to fall off, *Lemmings*-style, to kill them.
I was never interested in killing things in games. It's one of the reasons I'm not interested in getting back into the games industry now. I'm a bit sorry you could squash the ants in *Ant Attack*, though actually they were professional stunt actors. There were only five of them and they just go off set and reappear under the pyramid. No ants actually die.

These are zombies. They're dead already. We think you could have made the spray gun your character wields a little more lethal…
Yeah, what a strange cop out that was [laughs]. It's hard to pitch the difficulty level in a game so I was trying to come up with something self-adjusting to the skill of the player… the better you got at herding the zombies, the harder it got. But it just didn't work. The whole thing sucked.

That's a bit harsh.
I say that out of frustration that it went out before I was happy with it. I feel sorry I couldn't pull it off. I thought about it too much. It's folly for anyone creative to think too much.

The game had an interesting feature that allowed the player to drop blocks with their helicopter and create brand new structures. Was this the sculptor in you wanting to get kids building things for themselves?
That was definitely in my mind. There's an aeroplane sprite in the *Ant Attack* data and very late on in its development you could fly around and drop blocks. I liked that and wanted to incorporate it into the next game. If there's any contemporary game I wish I'd thought of it's *Minecraft*!

***Zombie Zombie* wasn't a commercial success but *Crash!* gave it 80% and said it was "more playable than *Ant Attack*."**
Did *Crash!* say that? Even by this stage I think a little bit of schmoozing with the ads department would get you a good review. I certainly tried hard with *Zombie Zombie*, but then creativity comes from your subconscious – your heart and your emotions. For me, once I start thinking too much, things go pear-shaped. First time around the magic was there, second time it wasn't.

For your third creative endeavour, you tried something very ambitious with *I, Of The Mask*. You actually created a 3D polygon based game on the Spectrum in 1985, eight years before we were dashing down corridors in *Doom*.
Yes, I had a 3D graphics engine, though it was very underpowered by today's standards. I think I could do 100 polygons a second and it was the first time I used something called a 'state machine'. It's a programming construct – very intricate code – that ends up drawing the scene straight on to the physical screen. Normally, you'd draw a 3D scene into a hidden memory buffer but, with *I, Of The Mask*, you can see it being drawn on to the screen from top to bottom in real time. I was very chuffed with it.

Dashing through the game's twisting corridors really is an impressive feat, Sandy.
It was one of the cleverest bits of code I've ever written. By that time, I'd met a few other Spectrum programmers. I knew John Hollis from Quicksilva of *Time-Gate* fame who was an incredibly clever and interesting chap. There was some friendly challenging going on and somewhere in the back of my mind I was thinking, 'I bet John would be impressed by this!'

***I, Of The Mask* is a technical triumph, but it can be pretty bewildering to play.**
I didn't have an f****** clue what was going on! I have seen someone do a play-through on YouTube recently, which is the first time I've seen it completed, and I still don't really know what's going on. What can I say? I'm really sorry.





SANDY'S SETUP

A recreation of the original desk Sandy would work at

A Cassette recorder doubles up as data storage for the Speccy and the Softy... requires serious faffing with tapes and cables...

B Speccy power supply, sitting on top of C so it can get even hotter...

C Tupperware box containing a 12V transformer out of an old cine projector... powers D.

D 5V voltage regulator attached to humongous heatsink. Mmm... more heat.

E All important data storage facility.

F Speccy manual, for use as table mat.

G Edge connector plugged into Speccy.

H Ribbon cable – a cable with lots of lovely colours.

I Tristate buffers and address decoding, allows to connect to Speccy without crashing it... most of the time.

J Massive 4k RAM, very impressive just a few years earlier.

K Softy computer displays contents of J on TV as hex digits, and allows editing.

L Softy Manual with diagram of Softy's status bytes... very handy, no seriously...

M Bandai Missile Invader... 'all work and no play', and all that...

N Screwdriver. Well you never know when that ol' Speccy might need opening up and prodding a bit.

O A bit of light reading material for visits to the bathroom.

P The absolute cheapest calculator available... and it was still too expensive.

Q Combination finger warmer and high frequency buzzer – or was that only mine?

R Casio VL Tone, for composing and transcribing music.

S Interchangeable sheets of rolled tree pulp used for recording data, code and notes – used much as a computer would be in today's era.

T Pencil with eraser – never use a pen to write code unless you can write bug free code.

U This is where the Jaffa Cake was supposed to go, sadly, it got eaten just a few seconds before the photo was taken.



» [Spectrum] *Zombie Zombie*: Luring a zombie to its death was rewarded with a jaunty snippet of *Ten Green Bottles*.

***I, Of The Mask* was published by Electric Dreams, set up by Rod Cousens after he left Quicksilva. Did he offer you complete creative freedom with the game?**
Rod asked me if I was doing another game and said, 'great, we'll publish it!' I should've been part of a team, just doing graphics engines, because that's what interested me at the time. Someone else should've done game design, but I was pretty full of it. I thought I could do everything. I even thought I'd learn how to use an airbrush and do the front cover myself [laughs]. I think I went through a megalomaniac phase. I got a lot of attention and it's not good for the ego. I thought I could do anything and, patently, I was deluded. This is becoming like psycho-analysis…

We'll send you the bill in the post.

I remember long nights finishing *I, Of The Mask*, staying awake for two weeks with an hour's sleep per night maximum because a deadline was looming. I was hallucinating in front of the Spectrum. I've blanked a lot out as it was pretty miserable by this point.

It was to be your final Spectrum game and your last published title, but you did work on *Dick Special*. Was the name your decision?
Willy had done well so I thought 'why not Dick?'

How far did you get with developing it?
It began as some experiments on the Spectrum before quickly moving up to the Amiga. The graphics were pretty sumptuous for the time. The first *Dick Special* demo I did looked quite cartoon-like. I had these big animated characters, about a third of the size of the screen, moving about in complex environments. I actually motion captured them using puppets.

Mo-cap puppets? Did you have to dress them up in Lycra suits with little orange balls attached?
[laughs] Not quite! I built what you'd now call a 'waldo' in film terms, which let you capture motion and it looked really human! It was really quite compelling and not something you'd seen on a computer back then, but it wasn't very useful for gameplay. It would be good for what you'd call a cutscene now, but I needed something the player could drive. So, I made an engine which was essentially isometric but with higher resolution than anything on the Spectrum.

What was the game about?
Dick was a Tintin type character. There was a hotel and a murder… it went through so many iterations and our ideas of what it would become were way ahead of what we could achieve. I think it would've ended up as a point-and-click detective story, but Telecomsoft pulled the plug with me owing them quite a lot of money.

So it didn't end well…
When I think back, I just remember a hell of a lot of politics. The industry had matured to the point of it being full of assholes. In-fighting and back stabbing. Telecomsoft had an office in New Oxford Street in London which I'd occasionally visit from Scotland. It was an incredibly horrible place – people watching their backs all the time, people being sacked… a highly unpleasant place to work.

So were you still with Angela at this point?
She was producing it and living in London, I was up in Edinburgh. It got pretty strained. We weren't a couple anymore and it got nightmarish. It's probably why I've left *Dick Special* buried, but I'm a great hoarder and I'm sure bits of it will surface eventually. I'll steel myself and put the demo disk into an Amiga one day.

With *Dick Special* cancelled at the end of the Eighties, did you leave the games industry behind?
In about 1994, I ended up working on hardware again, for Psygnosis, working on PSY-Q, which was their development system for PlayStation games. I remember seeing the first PlayStation there – it was the size of a fridge freezer, all hand-wired, running a dinosaur demo. I remember thinking, 'this is amazing, this is the future… but how can you get something moving realistically?' I thought of the work I'd done on *Dick Special* and started building a motion capture suit. I visited a shop in Soho that specialised in leather gear, looking for things that'd strap round my wrist and other body parts. They kitted me out nicely.

That's a lovely image Sandy. Did you get the suit working?
It rasped quite a bit when I breathed and it was so hot and sweaty I thought, 'forget it, I'll just simulate movement through maths!' I got a ragdoll physics engine running on a Pentium in late 1994, which was quite a feat. Psygnosis thought it was fantastic and gave me some money to keep developing it but, when I did a tour of the studios, hawking this thing around, no-one wanted it…

Do you think you'll ever return to making games, perhaps with an iOS version of *Ant Attack*?
Not really… until I spoke at the Retro Revival event in Wolves this year. Talking to people who are interested in old computers, some who hadn't even been born when I wrote *Ant Attack*, who play it just because they enjoy it. You know you made people happy and it makes you want to do it again! It's probably just a fantasy, though.

And we're back where we started, asking you about *Ant Attack*…
I wouldn't be doing this interview if I didn't enjoy it. My involvement with *Ant Attack* has been far greater in the years after it came out than during those five months I spent writing it. It amazes and delights me. I get to meet lots of interesting people and it's like having a super-duper hobby. I'm really into old tech – I collect old computers – and I've realised I've become a living museum piece. In some small way, I'm part of that story of old computers and I'm relishing the role!

Thanks to Fred White, Sandy's dad, for the portraits.

> " I started building a motion capture suit. A shop in Soho that specialised in leather gear kitted me out nicely "



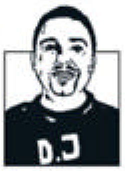
» Sandy standing proudly next to *Dick Special* on the Telecomsoft stand circa 1988.



PaRappa The Rapper

"KICK! PUNCH! IT'S ALL IN THE MIND"

RETROREVIVAL



» PlayStation
» NanaOn-Sha
» 1996

Masaya Matsuura may not have created the rhythm genre when he unleashed his cute rapping puppy, but he arguably popularised it and brought it to the attention of the gaming masses.

The core mechanics of *PaRappa The Rapper* are still widely used today, but in 1996 they were incredibly innovative, fusing gameplay to music in a way that few previous games had been able to successfully manage.

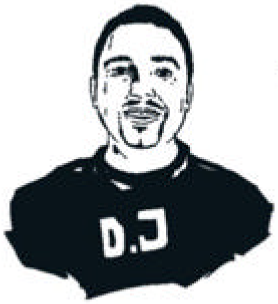
Matsuura's game is ridiculous fun, telling the tale of our titular hero who wants to steal the irresistible Sunny Funny away from his canine rival Joe Chin. What follows is a genuinely hilarious adventure that sees PaRappa rapping his way through karate lessons, a driving test and even a toilet queue, before finally making his debut on stage in an attempt to win Sunny Funny's flowery heart.

Gameplay is fairly basic and revolves around hitting buttons in time to the music's beat. There are only six stages, but *Parappa*'s clever ranking system – you'll drop one of four ranks if you mess up two lines in a row and must then play well for two lines to reclaim it – ensures that the game has plenty of replay value. And that's before you even delve into the freestyling that's unlocked after completing the game.

Brought to life by the distinctive artwork of Rodney Greenblat – Matsuura and Greenblat insisted it retained its 2D look – and featuring a range of superb tunes, *PaRappa The Rapper* is as entertaining as it is innovative.


COOL
U rappin' GOOD !
BAD
AWFUL
Yes!!

RETRORATED



>> We've had a diverse range of games this issue. Nintendo finally unleashes Pikmin 3 for Wii U, the ultimate rumble takes place in Project X Zone, while Rogue Legacy makes us fall in love with videogames again



PICKS OF THE MONTH



DARRAN

Rogue Legacy

Brilliant controls, awesome visuals and some intense boss fights all combine to create one of the best games I've played in ages. Amazing fun.



DAVID

Pikmin 3

Not a massive improvement over *Pikmin 2*, but that's because *Pikmin 2* got everything so very right.



GO DEEPER

>> Cellar Door Games first formed in 2009 and is based in Toronto, Ontario.

>> It's best known for its Flash games, including *I Have 1 Day* and the delightfully named *Don't Shit Your Pants*.

>> *Rogue Legacy* is currently only available on PC, but Mac and Linux versions will be available at a later date.

Rogue Legacy

THE GREATEST GAME YOU'LL PLAY THIS YEAR. NO, REALLY

INFORMATION

- » **FEATURED SYSTEM:** PC
- » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PRICE:** $15 (£11.99)
- » **PUBLISHER:** CELLAR DOOR GAMES
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- » **PLAYERS:** 1

» [PC] Not every room is filled with incredible danger. Earn a chance to win some money off this creepy looking clown.



Shut your eyes for a moment. Now imagine a game that takes the best elements of a roguelike and fuses it with glorious 2D pixel work. Sounds good, right? Now imagine it boasts the clever exploration of *Super Metroid*, the glorious item pick-ups of *Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night*, the clever progression system of *Demon's Souls* and the brutal challenge of *Spelunky*. Sounds incredible right? Now open your eyes, head to www.roguelegacy.com and buy that very game.

Rogue Legacy is everything that we love about videogames, and it's easily the best game we've played this year that doesn't have Us, Last, Of or The in the title. It's a very bold statement to be sure, but this is a bold game, a game that takes the myriad conventions of the 35 year-old sub-genre and turns them unceremoniously on their collective heads.

Rogue Legacy is all about your children. Some of them are assassins, some are barbarians and some are ninjas. Others are elderly, some fart and some even have maladies like gigantism and ADHD. You'll love each and every one of them however, and will heave a heavy sigh when they quickly succumb to the sheer amount of ridiculous dangers found in Castle Hamson and its three outlying areas.

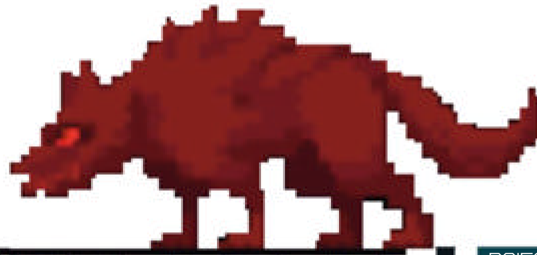
When your main character dies (and he will very quickly) he passes his meagre skills and gold onto his three children. Each child has an affliction ranging from OCD to dwarfism, and many affect gameplay. Gigantism gives you a larger reach for example, but makes you easier to hit, while near-sightedness means that the screen blurs the peripheral vision of your character. Once your child has been selected you can move onto spending your gold, which unlocks everything from new



» [PC] 'If you go down to the woods today you're sure of a swift demise.'









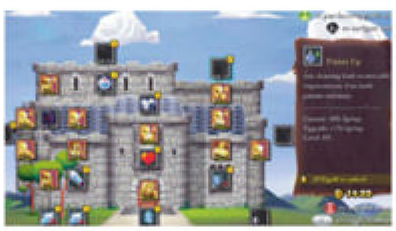
» [PC] This character is thin, meaning a strike from an enemy will throw her puny form backwards.



» [PC] When your lineage dies, you'll be shown the bodies of every creature they slew.

character classes to the ability to improve your base stats, health and chance for critical hits. It's a fantastic system, slowly unlocking and powering up your character who kindly passes on his newly acquired skills and equipment to the next in line. A blacksmith and enchantress can be found in the castle's grounds who will make new equipment and magical glyphs for you that, again, are passed on. There's even an architect who will lock the castle in place, allowing you to retrace your route.

The castle and its surrounding grounds are dangerous and filled with all manner of cute monstrosities. Each area features significantly tougher challenges and houses an insanely brutal boss. Kill every boss and



» [PC] Your manor doubles as a skill tree, allowing you to unlock more skills and classes, providing you have enough money…

you'll be able to tackle the threat that lies behind the main doors in Castle Hamson's lobby. Luckily, destroyed bosses stay dead, which is handy, as they soak up an insane amount of damage before they eventually expire. Boasting tough attack patterns that juxtapose their cute visages, the bosses of *Rogue Legacy* feel almost like they belong in a shoot-'em-up at times and you'll need to be suitably powered-up if you want to take them down.

Even when you've died against a boss for the 15th time you really won't mind because it's always your fault when it happens. Like *Spelunky* and *Demon's Souls*, the tightly crafted controls mean that you can't blame anything other than your own poor reactions and sense of greed. You'll continually enter a new room for no other reason than to get a whiff of the treasures that may lie inside and you'll often die painfully as a result. You'll simply get on with it though, safe in the knowledge that you won't make the same mistake the next time. Except you will.

BRIEF HISTORY

» Although *Beneath Apple Manor* came before it, it's *Rogue*, created in 1980 that is often credited for spawning the sub-genre of gaming known as the roguelike. Focusing on procedurally generated content, treasures and vicious monsters, the sub-genre has been entertaining gamers for the past 30-odd years and shows no sign of slowing down.

The nature of the procedurally generated dungeons will put some gamers off but, while some of them are overly tricky, you've always got a way to get through them, more so once you get useful skills like the double jump and the ability to fly (for limited amounts of time). Obtaining these skills becomes crucial as you progress because certain rooms have special chests that will only unlock if you pass a test. The tests themselves range from taking no damage to reaching a chest in a specific amount of time, to killing all enemies on-screen. Some are impossible without the relevant piece of equipment so you can either leave them, with the hope of encountering the same chest at a later date, or simply lock the castle down before you enter it. This is a fantastic trick, allowing you to better learn the castle's layout, but it does come with caveats: you earn less money and normal, opened treasure chests will remain empty.

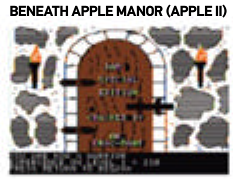
With its finely honed controls, glorious looking 2D visuals and chirpy chip tunes, *Rogue Legacy* is a fantastic game that, like *Spelunky* and *Demon's Souls* before it, constantly gives as you put more into it. *Rogue Legacy* proves that even the most well trodden genres can continue to impress if a little thought is put into them – and that there is still plenty of imagination to be found within the games industry. If games like *Rogue Legacy* didn't exist, the world would be a far sadder place.

retro GAMER SIZZLER

WHY NOT TRY

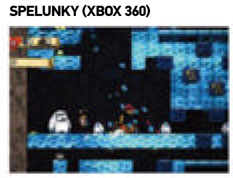
▼ SOMETHING OLD

BENEATH APPLE MANOR (APPLE II)



▼ SOMETHING NEW

SPELUNKY (XBOX 360)

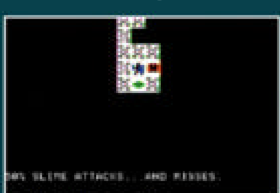


In a nutshell

It takes the tried and tested formula of roguelikes and platformers and smashes them together, delivering a fantastic experience bristling with old-school charm and insanely addictive gameplay. Buy it, love it, then get your friend to buy it and love it.

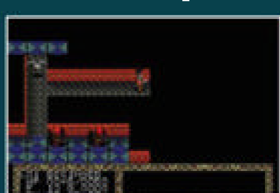
>> Score **97%**

More roguelikes you must play



Beneath Apple Manor (1978)

This game for the Apple II actually predates *Rogue*. Like *Rogue*, *Beneath Apple Manor* is about entering dungeons, killing monsters and collecting treasure as you search for the fabled Golden Apple.



Fatal Labyrinth (1991)

Sega's game first existed on its ill-fated Meganet service, before it made its Mega Drive debut. It's a decent take on the genre, but the reliance on eating food to survive does get a little frustrating.



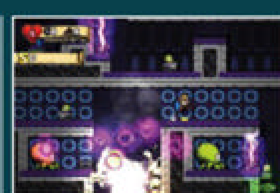
Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Red Rescue Team (2005)

Trust Nintendo to take an age-old sub-genre and give it a cute new spin. Chunsoft's series remains massively popular, providing an easy introduction to the sub-genre.



Mystery Dungeon: Shiren The Wanderer (2006)

Chunsoft's roguelike appeared on SNES before being ported to the DS. It features a neat mechanic where DS players can request the help of others wirelessly.



Spelunky (2009)

Derek Yu's delightfully brutal take on the roguelike first appeared on PC in a cute 8-bit form. In 2012 it was released on Xbox Live Arcade and featured greatly enhanced visuals. It's also heading to PS Vita.

Sturmwind

GOOD THINGS COME TO THOSE WHO WAIT

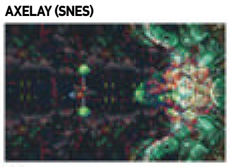
INFORMATION

- » **FEATURED SYSTEM:** DREAMCAST
- » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PRICE:** €34.95 (€69.95 LIMITED EDITION)
- » **PUBLISHER:** REDSPOTGAMES
- » **DEVELOPER:** DURANIK
- » **PLAYERS:** 1

WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD

AXELAY (SNES)



▼ SOMETHING NEW

AKAI KATANA (XBOX 360)



BRIEF HISTORY

» Publisher redspotgames is relatively new on the homebrew scene, having existed since 2005. Based in Munich, Germany, it's become well known for championing Sega's Dreamcast, with co-founder Max Scharl actively lobbying Japanese developers with petitions to release shooters on the console. It's recently started branching out to digital platforms like Xbox Live Arcade and WiiWare.



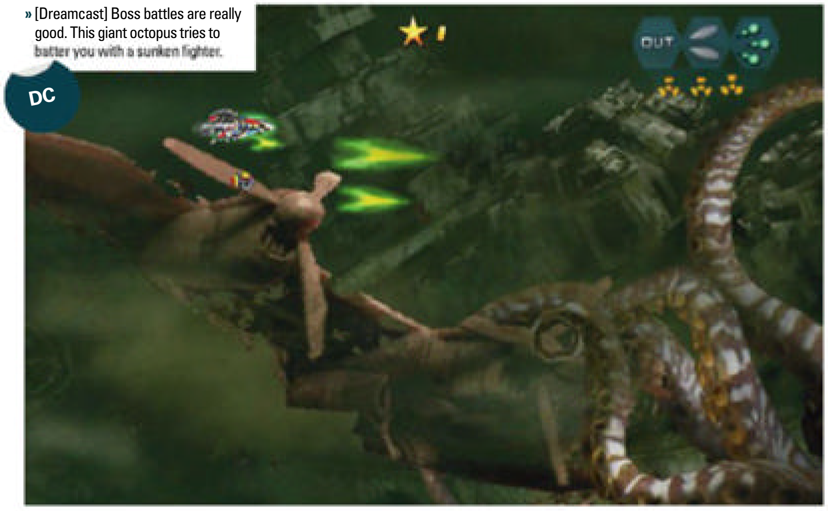
We're not usually big fans of European shoot-'em-ups, mainly because they always feel a little lacking when compared to their Eastern counterparts. *Sturmwind* is different however, delivering an intense shmup experience that is far better than many official releases on the machine.

Created by two brothers, *Sturmwind* has been a six-year labour of love, with Roland and Johannes Graf originally intending to release the game on Atari's Jaguar. It's ended up on the Dreamcast however, and we couldn't be more impressed with the end result.

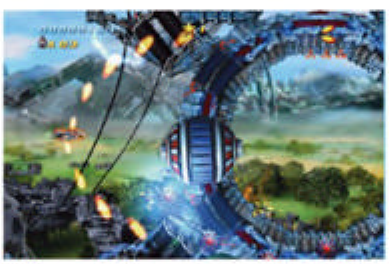
Mechanically, *Sturmwind* is extremely solid. There are three different main weapons – including a cool *Axelay*-style spread gun – that can be continually powered up by collecting the relevant coloured tokens. Get hit by a bullet or graze an object and you'll lose the currently equipped gun, which can fortunately be reclaimed by collecting the correctly coloured power-up. Your ship can switch from firing forwards to firing backwards with a simple touch of the left trigger, while satellites can be repositioned with the Y button for more advantageous firing. It's an elegant system, allowing you to concentrate on the huge attack waves *Sturmwind* constantly throws at you.

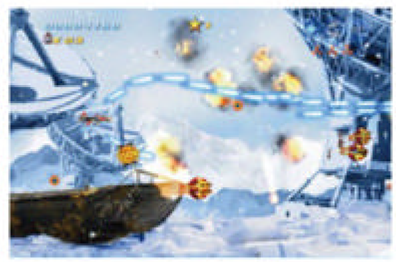
Graphically it's fantastic, with immensely detailed backdrops and some imaginative, well-animated boss encounters. The Euro-style soundtrack doesn't quite match the explosiveness of the gameplay – it peaks with the track found on level one – but it has slowly grown on us. It's the sheer imagination packed into *Sturmwind*'s 16 levels that really gets you though. Stars explode, filling the screen with an intense white light, underwater stages feature huge tentacles that snake their way below you, while one stage is illuminated only by your ship's light. Not every idea is pulled off – a lack of light and things that momentarily invert your controls in a shoot-'em-up are never good ideas – but, for the most part, Duranik pulls it off handsomely. *Sturmwind* even switches viewpoint occasionally to allow you to view the action directly above your ship. It's an interesting idea, but does feels a little underdeveloped.

Sturmwind avoids the pitfalls of many European shmups by making bullets easy to see, not over-complicating the scoring system and straddling the fine line between rip-off and homage for its gigantic bosses. It's occasionally hard to work out what parts of a stage you can and can't touch but, overall, this is a stunning achievement that every Dreamcast owner should experience.



» [Dreamcast] Boss battles are really good. This giant octopus tries to batter you with a sunken fighter.





» [Dreamcast] While the levels look generic occasionally, they have lots going on in them.

In a nutshell

***Sturmwind* delivers stunning visuals, satisfying gameplay mechanics and excellent boss battles to deliver the best Western developed shooter that we've played on Sega's console. It's taken an age to appear, but the wait has certainly been worth it.**

>> **Score 88%**

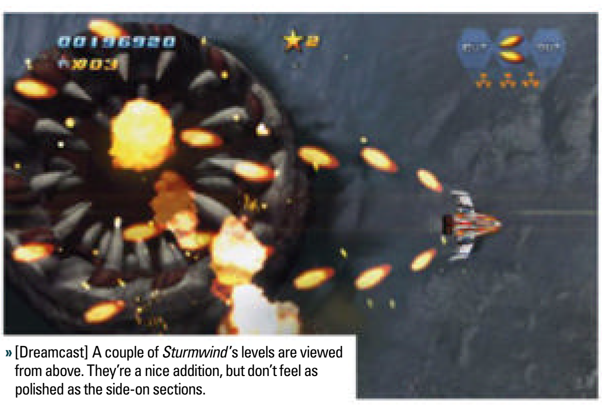
GO DEEPER

The facts behind Sturmwind

>> Duranik's previous games have included *Breakout* clone *Impulse* for the Atari Falcon and *Alpine Games* for the Atari Lynx.

>> Duranik planned another shooter for the Atari Jaguar called *Native*, which was cancelled in 1997. Download a demo from www.duranik.com.

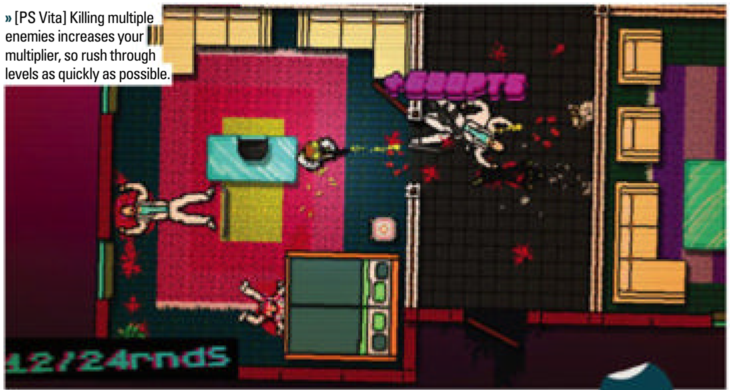
>> *Sturmwind* publisher redspotgames has released various other Dreamcast games, including *Wind And Water: Puzzle Battles*, *Rush Rush Rally Racing* and *Fast Striker*.



» [Dreamcast] A couple of *Sturmwind*'s levels are viewed from above. They're a nice addition, but don't feel as polished as the side-on sections.



» [Dreamcast] One downside of *Sturmwind* is that it's not always clear what you can and can't touch with your ship.



» [PS Vita] Killing multiple enemies increases your multiplier, so rush through levels as quickly as possible.

VITA

Hotline Miami

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** PS VITA » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** PC, PS3, MAC, LINUX » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
» **PRICE:** £6.49 » **PUBLISHER:** DEVOLVER DIGITAL » **DEVELOPER:** DENNATON GAMES » **PLAYERS:** 1



>> ***Hotline Miami* is** one of the most gruesome games we've ever played. Necks are snapped, people are brutally stabbed and shot bodies spray entrails everywhere. It's sick, it's violent, but we can't stop playing it.

At its heart, *Hotline Miami* is a score attack game. You go through an enemy hideout taking out each person as quickly and brutally as possible, getting points for style, creative kills and so on. Enemies have predetermined routes and respond if they see you, but the AI isn't the best meaning you're occasionally surprised by erratic actions. It's incredibly tough as well, with your character being just as frail as the enemies he despatches. It's a little awkward to play on Vita compared to the PC version, but it remains a great take on the genre.

>> Score **87%**

Pikmin 3

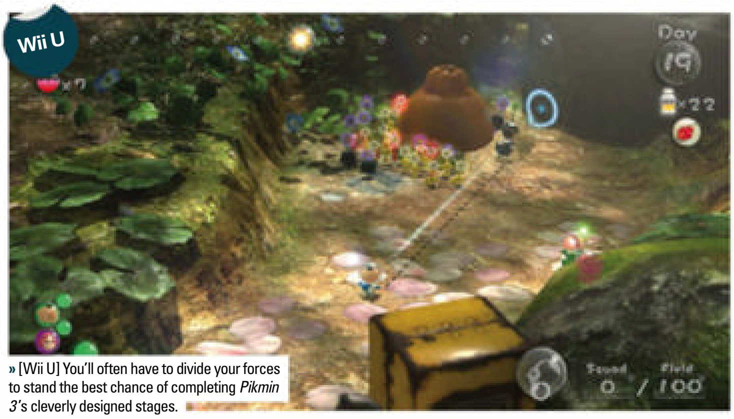
» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** WII U » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** NA » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
» **PRICE:** £44.99 » **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO » **DEVELOPER:** NINTENDO EAD GROUP NO 4 » **PLAYERS:** 1-3



>> ***Pikmin 3* is** easily the prettiest Wii U game we've played so far. The pikmin and their environments look stunning in HD, and you can almost imagine epic pikmin battles taking place at the bottom of your garden. Gameplay-wise, it's effectively a refinement of *Pikmin 2*'s controls, with the GamePad proving to be surprisingly effective at herding your pikmin and sending them to battle. A selection of new pikmin are introduced – you can now control three characters at a time – while there are plenty of imaginative boss fights as you play through the lengthy story mode. It's not evolving the *Pikmin* formula in any real way, but the tightly crafted level design, charming mini-games and beautiful aesthetics ensure its position as one of the first must-own Wii U games.

>> Score **89%**

Wii U



» [Wii U] You'll often have to divide your forces to stand the best chance of completing *Pikmin 3*'s cleverly designed stages.

Willy's Great Adventure

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** iOS » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** ANDROID » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
» **PRICE:** £1.49 (£1.49 ANDROID) » **PUBLISHER:** ELITE » **DEVELOPER:** TERRY LLOYD » **PLAYERS:** 1



>> **Before you get** excited, this has nothing to do with the Matthew Smith and Elite collaboration that was recently announced. *Willy's Great Adventure* is instead a 28-year-old mod of *Jet Set Willy,* and boy does it show. While it's been authorised by Matthew, it's not much of a recommendation. *Willy's Great Adventure* isn't very good, mainly because the level design is all over the place.

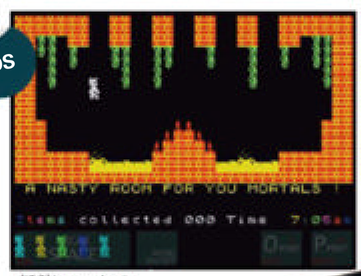
There are secrets to be found if you look for them, but many of the rooms just don't feel very well designed and it smacks of the 28-year-old fan project that it is. There seems to be little sense to some of the rooms – many require pixel perfect jumping that the touch controls can't really deliver – while you'll often die if you enter a room from the wrong position. The emphasis on exploring means that you'll occasionally get trapped with no possible means of escape. Mechanics like this felt quaint 30-odd years ago, but we expect a little more from our games today – even if this is a relic from the good old days.

Graphically it's exactly what you'd expect, with extremely similar visuals to the original *Manic Miner* and *Jet Set Willy,* but the characters lack the surrealistic style of Smith's creation and therefore a lot of the charm (although we did spot a few classics amongst the new sprites). Sonically it's pretty much what you'd expect from a Spectrum game as well and, while it's a little tinny, the sound effects will certainly raise a smile.

For many gamers, *Manic Miner* was a masterpiece of game design, but this is little more than an average platformer masquerading in Willy's clothing and, as a result, is hard to recommend. We did like his natty new hat though.

>> Score **55%**

iOS



» [iOS] Instant deaths abound if you're not careful.



» [iOS] The level design is very hit and miss, with some screens being far more entertaining to navigate than others.



» [iOS] An iCade would make this room a lot easier to cross, it's far tougher with the touchscreen.

RETROROUND-UP

>> Every month we look at all the classics and latest releases that are available to buy or download



DOWNLOAD OF THE MONTH



INFORMATION
» System: PC
» Buy it for: £9.99
» Buy it from: www.steampowered.com
» Score: 90%

Final Fantasy VII

retro GAMER SIZZLER

For many, *Final Fantasy VII* remains the best game in the series. If you've never experienced this 32-bit gem, then this recent Steam version – released a year after it made its debut on Square Enix's official store – is the perfect way to do so.

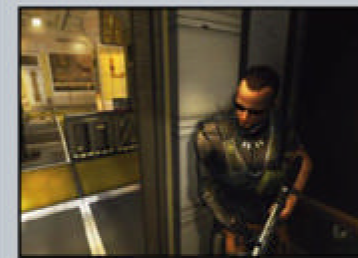
First released on PlayStation in 1997, *Final Fantasy VII* ushered in a new era for Square's RPGs, delivering stunning cinematics, a gripping story and a grandiose orchestral soundtrack, all spread across three discs. This new Steam release is an enhanced version of the PC port that appeared in 1998.

The most noticeable is that the visuals have been given a resolution upgrade, now catering for 1080p display. While the textures themselves haven't been changed, the whole graphical look has a sharpness to it (particularly in battle scenes) that we found rather pleasing. Sadly, the original PC music hasn't been given the same treatment, meaning that the midi files don't sound as nice as the PlayStation soundtrack.

Achievements and cloud saving have also been added – although the latter was a little tricky to set up – and there's also the option to use a new controversial Character Booster. This is only available via cloud saving and effectively maxes out all your characters, meaning that you can concentrate on simply enjoying the story. It's an interesting addition, but we can see it upsetting purists (we personally didn't like it).

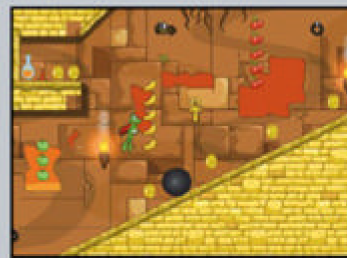
Aside from the aforementioned tweaks this is otherwise the same epic RPG that enthralled gamers back in 1997 and, while there's no denying that the graphics have certainly lost some of their sheen over the intervening years, the story and characterisation remain as strong as ever. Optional character boosting aside, this is arguably the best version of Square's classic game. It's just a shame DotEmu didn't sort the music out…

>> OTHER HIGHLIGHTS



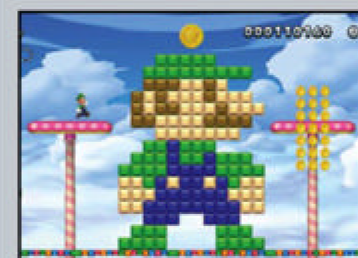
Deus Ex: The Fall

» **System:** iOS
» **Buy it for:** £4.99
» **Buy it from:** AppStore
» **Score:** 60%
» *The Fall* does a fantastic job of capturing the stylistic look of *Deus Ex: Human Revolution*. Unfortunately, that's where the similarities end, as the iPad proves ill-suited to such a complex game. The controls are extremely fiddly and often let you down when things get heated. Enemy AI is also poor, while the level design lacks the multi-path approach of other *Deus Ex* games. A decent adventure ill-suited to the platform it features on.



Superfrog HD

» **System:** PS Vita (tested) PS3
» **Buy it for:** £6.49
» **Buy it from:** online/retail
» **Score:** 71%
» Firstly, we're glad *Superfrog* is back. Secondly, we wish he wasn't so darned fast, as it's hard to avoid certain enemies – particularly on Vita. The lack of Lucozade and original graphics is also a shame. Niggles aside, *Superfrog HD* is actually a slick update of the classic Amiga platformer, with neat extras like a level editor, a re-tweaked difficulty setting and lots of secrets. It's a little aged now, but remains good fun.



New Super Luigi U

» **System:** Wii U
» **Buy it for:** £17.99
» **Buy it from:** Wii U eShop
» **Score:** 76%
» This massive add-on for *New Super Mario Bros Wii U* remixes the 82 courses of the original game and puts you in control of Mario's more skittish brother. The levels that Luigi faces are far tougher, with sneakily placed enemies and a complete lack of mid-level checkpoints. That doesn't make them better however, and, while the platforming remains a cut above the work of other developers, it's surprisingly sloppy for Nintendo.



Project X Zone

» **System:** 3DS
» **Buy it for:** £34.99
» **Buy it from:** 3DS eShop/online
» **Score:** 58%
» *Project X Zone* sounds brilliant on paper, being a dense RPG that combines some of the best characters from Sega, Capcom and Namco together. Unfortunately, the idea is far better than the reality. The story itself is pure bobbins, existing for no other reason than to bring classic characters together, while the strategy elements feel undercooked. The roster will entertain you, but the game itself is strangely lacking.



The Night Of The Rabbit

» **System:** PC (tested) Mac » **Buy it for:** £16.99 » **Buy it from:** online/retail » **Score:** 68%

Daedalic Entertainment's latest game is quite simply beautiful. It features enchanting hand-drawn 2D backgrounds that look like a storybook come to life, along with a host of cute anthropomorphic animals that are as well detailed and animated as the magical backdrops they inhabit.

The story as well is very entertaining, telling the tale of a young boy called Jerry who is offered an apprenticeship by a well-dressed rabbit two days before he's due back at school. He soon realizes that not everything is as it seems however, getting caught up in a huge adventure that does its best to evoke the classic point-and-click adventures of old.

The interface used throughout is very slick and works extremely well, but *The Night Of The Rabbit* is often let down by confusing puzzles where you'll simply click on everything in the hope of being able to proceed. It also feels a little too bloated at times, but there's no denying the sheer amount of charm packed into this old-school adventure.

>> The scene's latest news and reviews



Made In Creative UK is an initiative to raise awareness of the UK's contribution to the games industry. Along with some big name mainstream firms like Kuju and Crytek – and indies including IndieCity – the people behind the scheme have said that they're willing to include retro developers as well. It's nice to know that some of our 8 and 16-bit talent will hopefully be showcased on their website at www.MadeInCreativeUK.com/soon

COVERTAPE #2

PUT THEM TOGETHER AND WHAT HAVE YOU GOT?

We're used to the Mojon Twins name cropping up on a regular basis in homebrew circles, but there hasn't been much news from the collective lately – and now we know why. Because, along with the NES version of *Sir Abadol*, it's just released *Covertape #2* – a compilation containing 11 titles. There's also an introduction, which is playable but lacks a way to die, and a preview of *Sir Abadol 2*, which is actually a discarded level and could be considered a small but complete game in its own right.

As with the majority of Mojon Twins output, *Covertape #2*'s content is comprised of games that are either platform or maze-based, where the player is tasked with collecting a quota of objects and finding keys for locked doors. What makes each title in the collection stand out from the others – apart from some having ridiculously long or bizarre titles – is a combination of visual styling, the difficulty level and some of the games employing unusual control schemes to shake things up a bit.

In *Bootee* the player controls recurring character Cheril, whose legs have magically been changed into a giant boot, making her difficult to control as she constantly hops around. *Monono*'s twist is that the jump is feeble but, as long as the button is held down, grows stronger with each leap. *Jet Paco* does away with the jump entirely, swapping it for a thrust control similar to that of *Jetpac*, which sends the titular character soaring around the screen. Other games like *Balowwwn*, *D'veel'ng* – again starring Cheril – and *Mega Meghan* are all top down adventures that apply a degree of inertia to their controls.

Pretty much everything in this collection is up to the Mojon Twins standard, but having them all turn up at the same time does draw attention to how similar many of them are. This doesn't mean that they're bad games at all, however, and there's bound to be something for gamers of every skill level here. The titles we enjoyed most from the platforming side of things were the tricky *Dogmole Tuppowski Vs The Mesmerizing Meemaid From Miskatonic* and *Jet Paco*, while saving a witch's daughters in *D'veel'ng* – which is based on previous Mojon game *Cheril Of The Bosque* – and the tense fun of guiding a football around hazards in *Balowwwn* were very absorbing takes on the maze genre. *Ramire The Vampire And The Mushroom Of Cheshire*, *Julifrustris In The City* – which stars an R2D2 style robot and has a terrible 'joke' about Android revisions in the storyline – and *Bootee* are the tougher titles for more experienced gamers, the latter in particular due to its controls.

Some of the games contain graphics and storylines that are probably only suitable for adults, so readers may want to make sure their children aren't present when the Spectrum is loading them up.

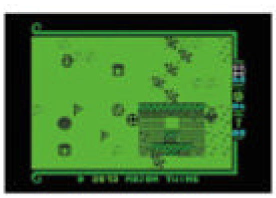
87%



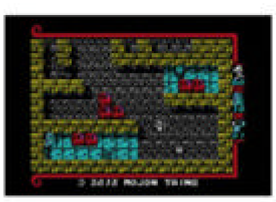
» [Spectrum] Putting the boot in.



FORMAT: SPECTRUM
DEVELOPER: THE MOJON TWINS
LINK: WWW.KIKSTART.EU/COVERTAPE-2-SPEC
RELEASE: 2013
PRICE: FREE
REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK



» [Spectrum] Remember to save often.



» [Spectrum] Which witch is which?



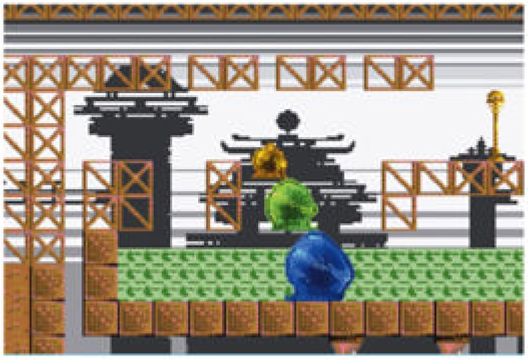
» [Spectrum] Guess who woz 'ere.



» [Spectrum] Where'd I leave that TARDIS?

NEW GAMES NEEDED

If you have a homebrew project you would like to see featured then please contact us at:
retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk



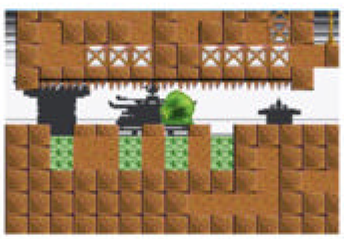
RUSSIAN BLOB

» **FORMAT:** GAME BOY ADVANCE » **DEVELOPER:** ALCAZAR
» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.KIKSTART.EU/RUSSIAN-BLOB-GBA » **PRICE:** FREE

***Russian Blob* was** designed by five students at French game design school ENJMIN, who wanted to challenge themselves by working on a more minimal platform and within a limited timeframe.

The titular globule needs guiding through scrolling levels containing pits of deadly green liquid and spikes. Pressing the right shoulder button splits a smaller blob from the main one that can leave its parent behind to make its way through more confined spaces. This can be repeated until there are four blobs, with the smallest one always under player control.

As long as there's space for it, pressing the left shoulder will teleport the next blob up from the current one to the player's position. The puzzles all hinge on finding the correct size for a specific hazard, with some places being easier when approached with a larger blob. The levels are devious but fun and, although it's somewhat short, *Russian Blob* is put together very well. **81%**



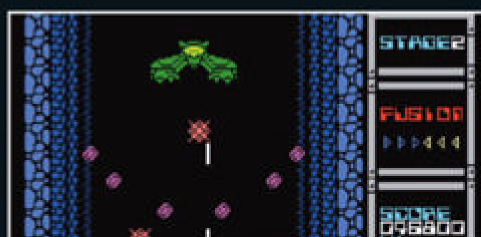
» [GBA] Another lonely day.

SHMUP!

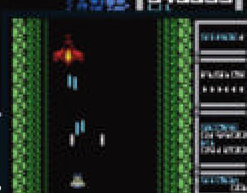
» **FORMAT:** MSX » **DEVELOPER:** IMANOK
» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.KIKSTART.EU/SHMUP-MSX » **PRICE:** FREE

The world is under attack and one brave pilot has, unusually, been given two spacecraft to repel these extraterrestrial menaces. Both craft are controlled by a single joystick and can fly in two formations that can be cycled between at any point with the second fire button. If enough fusion pods are collected they will merge into something even more capable of smashing enemies. The ships can be destroyed independently, with replacements dished out as long as there are lives remaining; earning 8,000 points will add a new ship to the spares pile.

Shmup! looks simple visually, with single colour sprites and an understated parallax effect in the background, rather than full-blown scrolling landscapes, but it isn't a game to be taken lightly and there's some thought needed to spot the best points to switch formations. Decent hand to eye co-ordination is also a requirement – the action is fast paced and each of the different enemies has their own distinct movement pattern. **85%**



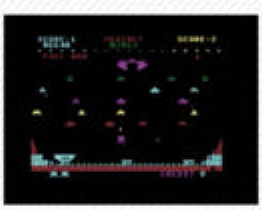
» [MSX] It's Big Time television.



» [MSX] Joined at the… hip?



» [C16] Missed me, missed me.





LUNAR RESCUE

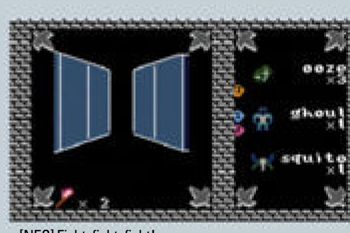
» **FORMAT:** COMMODORE 16 » **DEVELOPER:** DANIEL CRESPO ANDRÉS
» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.KIKSTART.EU/LUNAR-RESCUE-C16 » **PRICE:** FREE

The lunar colonies are rapidly being overrun by extraterrestrials and the colonists need to be ferried to the safety of a mother ship in orbit. The player takes control of a Lunar Excursion Module and rescuing a colonist means launching this small craft, guiding it down to one of the landing pads on the moon's surface through a field of asteroids and then returning to orbit through the swarm of flying saucers. During its descent, the ship's thrusters can be fired to slow movement and a weapon can be fired upwards when ascending.

Lunar Rescue isn't an exact conversion of the Taito coin-op that inspired it, but it's still fairly playable. There's quite a bit of sluggishness to the movement of in-game objects and keyboard responses, so holding a key can store up commands and send the LEM careering out of control, but tapping the keys seemed to work and made saving colonists a little less frustrating. **66%**

WHAT'S BREWING?

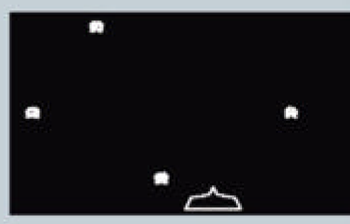
All the latest news from the homebrew community



» [NES] Fight, fight, fight!

>> LET'S GO ADVENTURING!

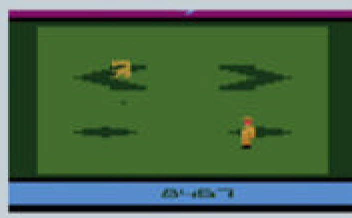
Sly Dog Studios' *Candelabra: Estoscerro* is a dungeon crawling game for the NES that uses an unusual two pad system to control a party of three adventurers as they explore maze-like tunnels. We've had a quick play of the demo at Sly Dog's website and, although there's not much of a level there and it hasn't been properly tested at this stage, it does feel quite solid. www.kikstart.eu/candelabra-demo-nes.



» [Vectrex] Always hopeful, yet discontent.

>> INVADERS, POSSIBLY FROM SPACE

The difficulty is very unbalanced right now – to the point where the fourth level will almost certainly kill most players – but *Nagoya Attack* for the Vectrex is an early version of a *Space Invaders* inspired shoot-'em-up that looks and sounds very promising. www.kikstart.eu/nagoya-vectrex leads to the developer's thread over at the Atari Age forums with the demo ROM to download and linkage to a YouTube video.



» [Atari 2600] Looking a lot less green now!

>> INTERNATIONAL DIALLING

Finally, we have *ET: The Extra-Terrestrial* for the Atari 2600, or rather a patched and more playable version. www.kikstart.eu/fixing-et-2600 documents the repairing of legitimate bugs, changing ET's colour, installing an Easter Egg and altering collision detection so falling into a well doesn't happen when ET's head touches it. It's an interesting but extremely technical read and there's a ROM to download as well.

HOMEBREW

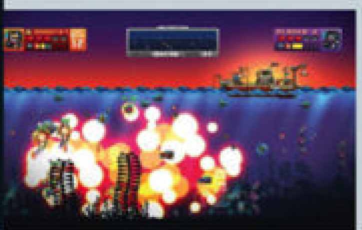
>> The scene's latest news and reviews

WHAT'S BREWING?

All the latest news from the homebrew community

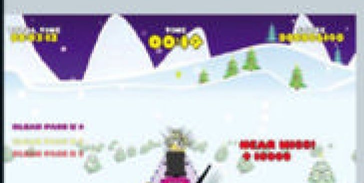
>> SKY OF BLUE AND SEA OF GREEN

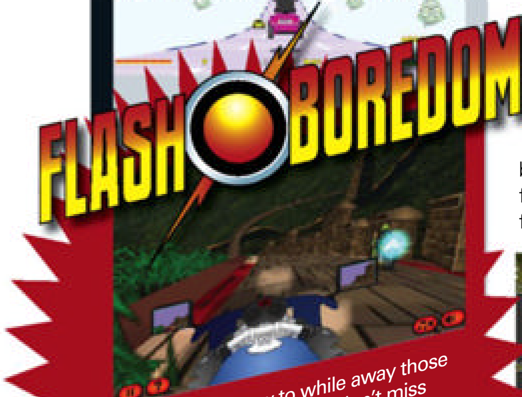
Aqua Kitty is a *Defender*-inspired Xbox Live indie shoot-'em-up set in a future where cats are mining something very similar to full fat milk from underwater wells. The player controls a small sub and must defend the drilling rigs from attack by robotic sea life and save any abducted feline workers before they're dragged away. We've given it a quick blast and, after a little acclimatising to the unusual control scheme, found it to be reasonably playable and nicely presented. Wade over to www.kikstart.eu/aqua-kitty-xblig for more information.



>> BLUE RINSE RACING

Sticking with absurd storylines, *Fanny Granny's Great Escape* hands the player control of a gran aboard a shop mobility scooter as it hurtles down the motorway. The scooter can barrel roll between lanes, leap over traffic and has what we'll tactfully describe as a 'methane boost' which, when charged, will let it smash other vehicles off the road. www.kikstart-eu/granny-xblig.

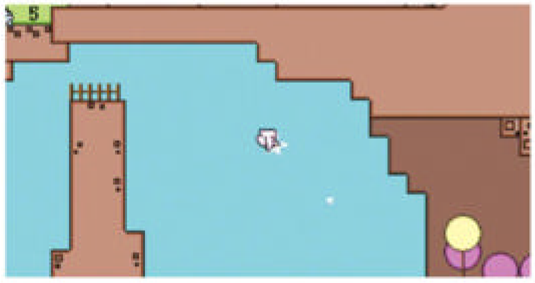


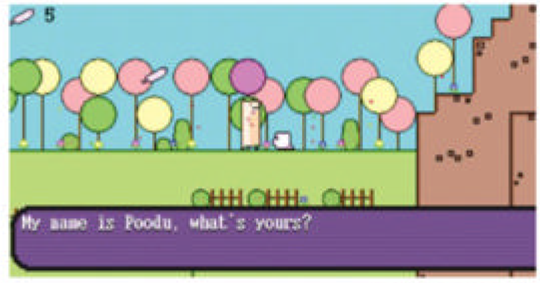


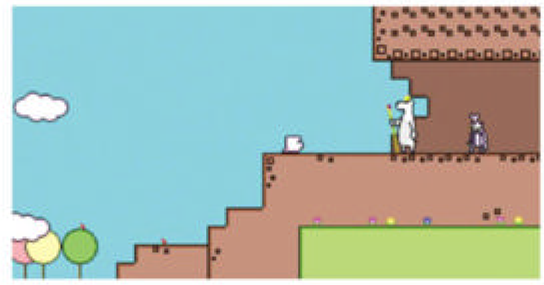
Want to know how to while away those boring office hours? Then don't miss out on **Retro Gamer**'s Flash game of the month. This month we look at **Coaster Racer 3.**

TAKE ONE OF THREE SOUPED UP VEHICLES AND RACE AROUND TRACKS SUSPENDED HIGH ABOVE THE GROUND OR EVEN IN OUTER SPACE! GET WINS IN RACES AND SIDE MISSIONS TO BUY CAR AND BIKE UPGRADES SO THAT THEY'RE READY TO COMPETE IN THE FINAL LEVEL OF THIS POWER DRIFT-INSPIRED CHALLENGE. WWW.KIKSTART.EU/COASTER-3-FLASH.

MORE GAMES WE'VE BEEN PLAYING. . .







COTTONHEAD

» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.KIKSTART.EU/COTTONHEAD-PC

Released in the recent Ludum Dare competition, *Cottonhead* is the story of a charming little cloud-being who has accidentally fallen to Earth from his home town of Cottoncity. Since he's young and isn't yet capable of flight, if he wants to get back home he'll need to master that art before heading skywards to meet the local wizard who can aid him further in his quest.

This is a very nicely presented and cute little platform game, so it's something of a shame that it only comes with a couple of quests to complete – we walked through everything in around 20 minutes on the first go and would have enjoyed a chance to learn more about *Cottonhead*, the people he meets and their world.

COPS N ROBBERS

» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.KIKSTART.EU/COPS-ROBBERS-XBLIG

A gang of bank robbers have just pulled off a daring heist, only to have fate strike them a cruel blow during their escape, leaving all of their ill-gotten loot spread out across the centre of town. The thieves need the player's help to collect the coins while avoiding other road users and the now less than happy police in their fast-moving cruisers. Sticks of dynamite can be strategically deployed to send the coppers back to their base.

Cops N Robbers is basically a copy of *Pac-Man* with a police flavoured skin on top and a few extra features. The enemy AI, like many clones, isn't particularly bright and at its most random can prove quite annoying, but the simple yet fast-paced gameplay is frantic and enjoyable.







SECTOR 7-4-9ER

» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.KIKSTART.EU/SECTOR-749-XBLIG

The life of a space-bound mining engineer is a lucrative one; heading into deep space, locating asteroids and blowing them up to get at the precious minerals below the surface can earn the bravest engineers a lot of cash. But minerals aren't the only thing that can be mined from asteroids, and there are occasional pieces of alien technology, energy crystals and alien life forms of various kinds to be found. Some aliens are helpful, but most are hazardous. Some will explode when blasted and these can be used, with a bit of skill and some shots fired from a safe distance, to knock large chunks of the asteroid away.

There are two mining ships available to take tunnelling. One craft has a 'push to go' control scheme which is easy to use, while the other needs to be rotated before its thrusters drive it forward or backwards, with the advantage of using the trickier controls being the extra firepower that the ship carries. That said, wading in with all guns blazing doesn't really work with *Sector 7-4-9er*, a more methodical approach to mining chunks of an asteroid is far more productive.





HOMEBREW HEROES

RECENTLY WE PLAYED THE MONOCHROMATIC PUZZLER NINJA TWINS. WE GOT IN TOUCH WITH DEVELOPER DAVIT MASIA – WHO WORKS UNDER THE NAME MATRIAX AND PUBLISHES GAMES UNDER THE KRONBITS LABEL – TO DISCUSS SQUARE NINJAS AND TRICKY PUZZLES

Q&A

To begin, where did the inspiration for *Ninja Twins* come from?

The idea was a mix of two Flash games called *Guardian Rock* and *One And One Story*. The players were changed into ninjas instead of a boy and girl because everything is more fun with ninjas!

It sports a very distinctive style, was this there from the beginning or did it come later?

From the beginning I made the game using only four grey colours – later I added some red for the blood – all to get a retro style similar to the old NES games.

I selected this style because it was easy and fast, and for my first coded game I looked to spend the least time possible doing the game art to dedicate the major part of my time learning Multimedia Fusion 2 to develop games.

The game's difficulty level is really quite high, how hard is it balancing something like this?

Well it was easy, I didn't look to get the levels increasing in difficulty again and again. I divided the 30 levels into Easy, Normal, Hard, Very Hard and Extreme, and for this reason you can finish one in 25 minutes and the next in 40, for example.

The first nine levels go from Very Easy to a little tricky as you learn the basics. In ten to 20 you will find Normal to Hard levels, 21 to 27 are Hard to Very Hard levels and the three last ones are Extreme.

There are gameplay videos on the internet and some unfinished walkthroughs, but nobody seems to have finished the game. If I made the game again I wouldn't change my decision of creating very hard puzzles.

Do any particularly good or bad moments from the development of *Ninja Twins* stand out for you?

The good moments were when I had the first playable prototype with all the features running on PC and Flash, because I never imagined that I [would] learn to develop games in my life.

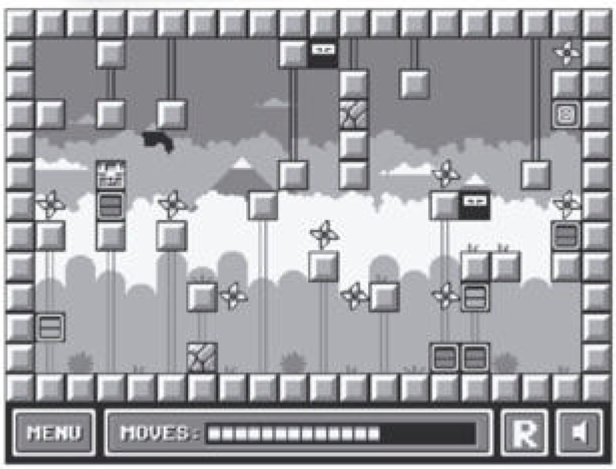
And the bad moment was when a week trying to add some features proved impossible – all types of bugs and things working differently between Windows and Flash… There were times where I nearly left the game with only one or two elements or stopped working on it completely.

And finally, can you tell our readers something about what you're working on in the immediate future?

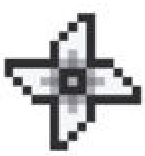
Right now I'm working on a game called *No Time To Stop*, an arcade platformer with some logic puzzles where the player is always moving. Your controls are jump, slide and shoot. If you think my previous game was hard, wait until you see this!

The graphics are pixel art at 120x80 resolution using a 16-colour palette and, after being scaled up eight times (to 960x640), I add shadows, lights and glow effects.

The game is planned to be released when it's done on Windows, Mac, Linux, Android/iOS, the OUYA and probably the GameStick.



» [PC] Health and safety issues in the workplace.



» [PC] The way of the warrior.





» [PC] Hiding in plain sight.





» [PC] Wise words indeed.



» [Various] How to make a multi-platform ninja.

MAILBAG

HAVE YOUR SAY... SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON THE ONLINE FORUM – **WWW.RETROGAMER.NET**

STAR LETTER

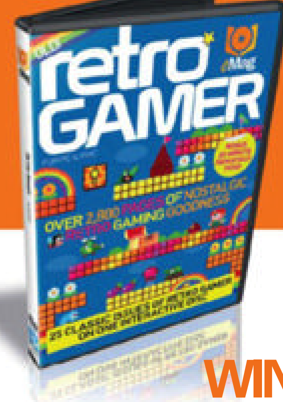
COLLECTOR'S CORNER

Dear Retro Gamer,
Could you please do a feature on collecting retro games? I hang out on numerous retro forums and am always amazed at people's collections and the lengths they go to when building them.

Some are simply trying to recapture their lost youth, others want to experience games they've not yet played. I've seen some people who will think nothing of spending £500 on a single game, while others will happily wait two or three years for a game to appear at a price they're happy to pay. There are even those who buy games and never play them, which I find utterly baffling. I personally collect because I was quite poor growing up and was unable to play many games. I'm now in a position where buying a SNES and classic games is not an issue for me. I also play them with my ten year-old son and we regularly go car booting in the hope of finding some bargains. I'm sure there are plenty of readers out there with far more interesting stories than mine and I'd love to read about them.
Stephen James


» Darran isn't as serious a collector as he once was, but he does own quite a nice SNES collection still.

Great idea Stephen. Everyone on Retro Gamer has been obsessed with collecting at some point (some more than others) so this sounds like it could be a really interesting article. In the meantime, treat yourself to an eMag for coming up with such a great idea.



WIN!

Every month, one lucky reader will receive a copy of our latest eMag, **Retro Gamer Load 3**, a bargain if ever there was one. All you have to do is present a lucid, thought-provoking piece of literature that melts our souls. Failing that, something funny with swear words, or something *Strider*-related will go down just as well...



From the forum

» www.retrogamer.net/forum

Every month, Retro Gamer asks a question on the forum and prints the best replies. This month we wanted to know...

What are the best puzzle games?

The Beans
I've never really been into puzzle games that much until recent offerings like *Puzzle Quest* and *Bejeweled Blitz* pulled me in.

Spacepatrol
You can't do a feature on puzzle games without mentioning the granddaddy of them all – *The Fool's Errand*. It is 25 years old and I still love playing it now. Never did get to finish it!

Soup Dragon
In my humble opinion: *Chu Chu Rocket*.

koopa42
I only like *Tetris* on the original Game Boy. Does anyone else suffer from this?

thebear
Not retro, but *Candy Crush Saga* has to be mentioned. Probably no puzzle game since *Tetris* has had more mainstream impact. It seems everyone is playing it!

joefish
I played a lot of *Lemmings* and *Puzznic* on my ST. *E-Motion* was good too, but not the best. *Deflektor* was a great game. Let's also not forget *Chip's Challenge*.

Black Ridge
The most played games on my Neo Geo Pocket Color have to be *Puzzle Link* and *Puyo Pop*. Easy to pick up, but hard to put down sometimes!

SonicTheHedgehog
I Love *Bust-A-Move 2* and *Chu Chu Rocket*. *Tetris* would be another.

Hiro
Pushover on the Amiga was an excellent game. Cool intro, rewarding gameplay and a (fairly) increasing difficulty level. It's a shame it did not spawn any sequels. Great puzzler.

ShadowNeku
Has anyone mentioned *Gunpey* yet? Great series of WonderSwan puzzlers that eventually appeared on DS and PSP. Also loves me a bit of *Magical Drop*.

Havantgottaclue
I used to really enjoy *Bombuzal* on the C64. It was unusual in having a 3D and 2D mode.

XBOX NO

Dear **Retro Gamer,**
I noticed that last month a reader was asking for coverage of Xbox games in your magazine. I would like to say that if this were to happen I would have no choice but to stop buying your magazine, as it would be clear that you have no interest in retro. The Xbox is not retro in any way and it amazes me that someone like Darran would even consider its inclusion. What next? The Xbox 360, PS Vita and Wii U? I buy **Retro Gamer** to read exclusively about 8-bit home computers, and nothing else. If you start getting rid of 8-bit content in favour of modern rubbish then get ready to lose your readers.
Ben Jacobs

XBOX YES

Hi **Retro Gamer,**
I was really pleased to see Steven Perry's letter in your last issue and wanted him to know that he's not alone in wanting to see coverage of the Xbox. I am 27 years old and have a healthy interest in all aspects of retro gaming. I was an impressionable 15-year-old when *Halo: Combat Evolved* came out, which seems like forever ago now. I'm also interested in older games, particularly from the 16-bit generation, but ideally want to read about the games I enjoyed in my youth. I'd love to know how *Halo* was created and I think it would be a crying shame if you had to ignore these old (and they are old) consoles for fear of upsetting even older readers.
Peter Thompson

We've had a lot of readers talk about the Xbox generation, both via email and on our forums. As things progress we'll certainly start covering games from this era, but it will be minimal and balanced to the needs of the larger readership. If we ran a making of a game like *Halo* or *Shadow Of The Colossus*, it would be the only content from that generation to appear that issue. We're clearly getting to a stage where newer readers are younger readers, but we'll never abandon our core audience, which is fully entrenched in the 8 and 16-bit eras. We'll be sticking to Future Classics for the time being, but when change comes it will be one feature at a time.


» [PC] It seems that readers remain undecided about last-gen games. Let us know what you think online.

STEALTH READER

Dear **RG,**
I went to my local newsagents the other day and came across your magazine. Flicking through the pages idly, my initial interest soon turned into disgust as page after page my eyes surveyed the most profane images they had ever encountered, and I could not fathom why any videogaming magazine

Don't forget to follow us online for all the latest retro updates

RetroGamerUK @RetroGamer_Mag



CONTACT US

Snail Mail: Retro Gamer, Imagine Publishing, Richmond House, 33 Richmond Hill, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH2 6EZ

Email: retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk

that youngsters could read would contain so much, well, utter filth is how I would have to describe it. Imagine my surprise when, soon after, I realized that I had concealed a porny mag within the pages of **RG** in order to steal it. I tell you, me and my mates had such a good laugh about it afterwards.

Keep up the lovely work,

Ashley J Preston.

You do realize we're not *Viz* right?



» The Ouya certainly appears to be popular with readers, but where do you stand on emulation?

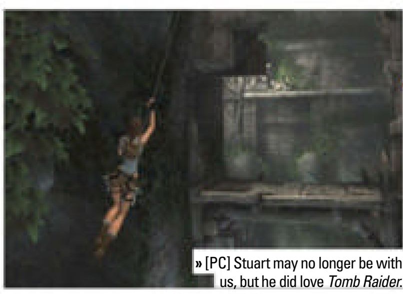
SHORT BUT SWEET

Dear **Retro Gamer,**

I'm sorry to hear that Stuart Hunt is leaving **Retro Gamer.** He was a fan and supporter of the *Tomb Raider* franchise. Someone else needs to step forward for these simulation third-person shooter games including *Indiana Jones* and *Half-Life*. Stuart Hunt, thank you for listing *Tomb Raider* as your favourite game!

John M Dilorio

Thanks for the kind words about Stuart, John – we're sure he'll appreciate them. Unfortunately, you've now gone and made Darran all upset. In fact he's so upset he's now writing about himself in the third person.



» [PC] Stuart may no longer be with us, but he did love *Tomb Raider*.

OUYA LOVE

Dear **Retro Gamer,**

Will you be running a feature on the Ouya anytime soon? I am interested in buying the console purely for emulation use, but want to make sure that the emulation is spot on before I consider purchasing one. I'd also like to see Ouya reviews in the magazine as I think many of them look like classic games anyway. I love the idea of a homebrew console that can play classic games, so any coverage you can give it would be greatly appreciated, especially as I'm hearing lots of conflicting reports about it.

Kindest regards,

Greg Tucker

Hi Greg, glad to hear you're interested in the Ouya. We will most likely do something on it in the future, as it does have a lot of decent emulators already available, but we don't have anything currently planned.

DISCUSSED THIS MONTH

Strider

Press deadlines meant it was too late to talk to anyone about *Strider* (more next month). That hasn't stopped Darran from going absolutely crazy though, and he's already thoroughly dissected the seven minute gameplay video that's currently available. He's also bored everyone in the office by repeatedly telling them just how good the second level of *Strider* actually is. Apparently it's really, really good.

REMEMBER ME

Dear **Retro Gamer,**

I am trying to remember a game I used to play around my friends house on his Spectrum back in the day. It was a platformer and looked like *Manic Miner* and *Jet Set Willy*, but it didn't have the level variety and I remember many of the screens were very blue. I used to love playing it with my friend Mark though, because I was always better at it than he was. I'd love to play through it again, but I just can't remember what it's called. Any help you could give me would be greatly appreciated.

Daniel Passey

You're in luck Daniel, as we're pretty sure we know the game you're describing. We're extremely confident that you're referring to a game called *Mr Freeze*. It was released by Firebird in 1984 and sees the titular character de-icing a giant freezer, which explains why all the levels are so blue. Hope it brings you fond memories.

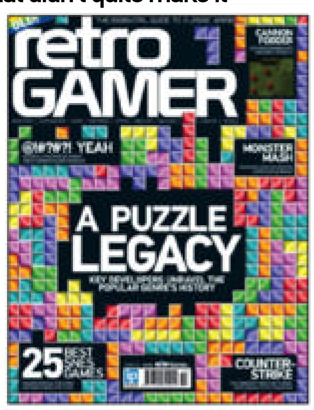
THE ONES THAT GOT AWAY. . .

Darran discusses the covers that didn't quite make it



CASTLEVANIA COVER

Super Castlevania IV is a great game and we had some fantastic content on it courtesy of John Szczepaniak. Unfortunately, the artwork of old games can be impossible to source, meaning you have to rely on scans instead. No matter how much we tried we couldn't get this to work effectively, so we went with another option.



BLUFFER'S GUIDE TO PUZZLE GAMES

Everyone likes *Tetris* right? We do too and felt it would be the perfect game to represent our fantastic in-depth feature about the puzzle genre. We tried various types, including a monochromatic Game Boy version, but just couldn't get any of them quite right.

Special thanks to Mat Allen and Adrian Mitchell for their Super Castlevania IV scans

retro GAMER

Imagine Publishing Ltd
Richmond House, 33 Richmond Hill,
Bournemouth, Dorset, BH2 6EZ
☎ +44 (0) 1202 586200
Web: www.imagine-publishing.co.uk
www.retrogamer.net
www.greatdigitalmags.com

Magazine team

Editor **Darran Jones**
retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk
☎ 01202 586237
Editor in Chief **Nick Roberts**
Senior Designer **Jonathan Wells**
Sub Editor **Stephen Holmes**
Photographer **James Sheppard**
Senior Art Editor **Andy Downes**
Head of Publishing **Aaron Asadi**
Head of Design **Ross Andrews**

Contributors
Luke Albigés, Adam Barnes, Mike Bevan, Richard Burton, Martyn Carroll, David Crookes, Paul Davies, Megan Davis, Paul Drury, Andrew Fisher, Kieren Hawken, Jason Kelk, Iain Lee, Graeme Mason, Rory Milne, Samuel Roberts, John Szczepaniak

Advertising
Digital or printed media packs are available on request
Head of Sales Hang Deretz
☎ 01202 586442
hang.deretz@imagine-publishing.co.uk
Advertising Manager Simon Catley
☎ 01202 586437
simon.catley@imagine-publishing.co.uk
Account Manager Anthony Godsell
☎ 01202 586420
anthony.godsell@imagine-publishing.co.uk

International
Retro Gamer is available for licensing. Contact the International department to discuss partnership opportunities.
Head of International Licensing Cathy Blackman
☎ +44 (0) 1202 586401
licensing@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Subscriptions
Head of Subscriptions Gill Lambert
gill.lambert@imagine-publishing.co.uk
For all subscription enquiries
email retrogamer@servicehelpline.co.uk
☎ (UK) 0844 848 8412
☎ (Overseas) +44 1795 592 872
13 issue subscription UK – £51.90
13 issue subscription Europe – £70
13 issue subscription ROW – £80

Circulation
Head of Circulation Darren Pearce
☎ 01202 586200

Production
Production Director Jane Hawkins
☎ 01202 586200

Founders
Group Managing Director Damian Butt
Group Finance & Commercial Director Steven Boyd
Group Creative Director Mark Kendrick

Printing & Distribution
Printed by Wyndeham Heron Ltd, Bentalls Complex, Colchester Road, Heybridge, Maldon, Essex, CM9 4NW
☎ 01621 877 777

Distributed in the UK & Eire by: Seymour Distribution, 2 East Poultry Avenue, London, EC1A 9PT
☎ 020 7429 4000

Distributed in Australia by: Gordon & Gotch, Equinox Centre, 18 Rodborough Road, Frenchs Forest, NSW 2086
☎ +61 2 9972 8800

Distributed in the Rest of the World by: Marketforce, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street, London, SE1 0SU
☎ 0203 148 8105

ISSN 1742-3155

retro GAMER

nextmonth

» LOAD 120

ON SALE 12 SEPTEMBER 2013

VIDEOGAME

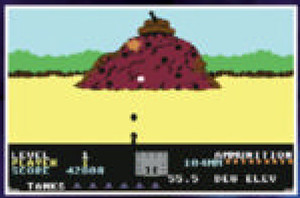
From Mario to Miner Willy and Lara Croft, we celebrate the most popular gaming mascots of all time, while asking developers to name their personal favourites





Beat-'em-ups

■ We speak to Archer Maclean and Yoshinori Ono about the ever-evolving fighting genre for our latest Bluffer's Guide



Access Software

■ Discover how Bruce Carver created his hit war game *Beach Head* and changed golf games forever with *Leaderboard*



3DO

■ The 3DO Company's dynamic console turns 20 this year. Join Trip Hawkins as he recalls the creation of the 3DO Interactive Multiplayer



Shadowrun

■ As *Shadowrun Returns* finally gets released on PC, we speak to the creators behind the original SNES classic.


/RETROGAMEBASE
/RETRO_GAME_BASE
RETRO GAME BASE
Pre-Order Retron 5
WE HAVE JUST SIGNED A 5 YEAR LEASE!
LONDON'S ONLY DEDICATED RETRO GAME STORE IS HERE TO STAY!
MORE STOCK THAN EVER BEFORE!
WWW.RETROGAMEBASE.CO.UK
430 STREATHAM HIGH ROAD, LONDON, SW16 3PX
0203 489 6146 | SHOP@RETROGAMEBASE.CO.UK


To Advertise In
retro GAMER
Contact Anthony Godsell
on 01202 586420
anthony.godsell@imagine-publishing.co.uk

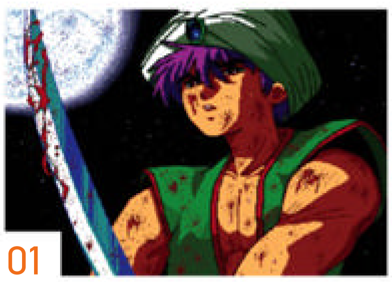

MUTANT CATERPILLAR GAMES
... SINCLAIR ... COMMODORE ... ACORN ...
MACHINES
REPAIRS
10% OFF your first order when you use discount code "retrogc1"
HARDWARE
SOFTWARE
ALL OUR STOCK IS TESTED, WORKING AND GUARANTEED
FREE UK inland postage - excellent international postage rates
www: www.mutant-caterpillar.co.uk
email: sales@mutant-caterpillar.co.uk
ebay: mutant-caterpillar
tel: 01970 625441
... AMSTRAD ... ATARI ... ANYTHING ELSE!

ENDGAME



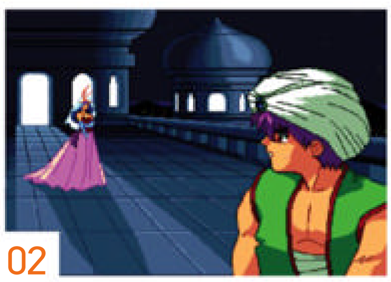
PRINCE OF PERSIA

» How many systems has Prince Of Persia now appeared on? We genuinely can't remember, but we're pretty sure that the number falls somewhere between five and 50. What we do know is that the Sega CD version had an ending that put many of the other conversions to shame, mainly because it used impressive animated cutscenes to tell the age-old story of boy meets girl



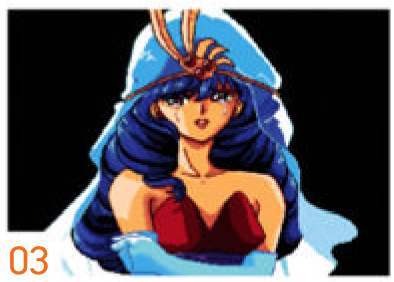
01

» After a dramatic sword fight the sultan finally gets what's coming to him – a sword right through his chest. Drenched in blood, our hero pulls off a dramatic pose, whilst wondering if he'll ever get those bloodstains out of his new clothes.



02

» Our hero looks up to see the princess, now free from her prison and moving to greet the young adventurer. While everyone gets caught up in the soppy drama, Bits Laboratory flips the continuity switch. Hey presto – clean clothes.



03

» As the princess approaches her saviour she's overcome with joy. Tears stream down her face when she happily realises that she's no longer going to have to worry about getting those hard to remove bloodstains out of his posh threads.



04

» The pair run up to each other and engage in a fierce embrace. We've no idea why Bits Laboratory didn't use another cutscene here. Maybe it ran out of money making all the blood disappear from our hero's clothes in the previous scene.



05

» The princess marries her rescuer and the kingdom rejoices, living happily ever after. Or, at least until the sequel. Possible budget cuts mean that Bits Laboratory treats us to another bland screen. Who could have known removing blood was so expensive?


APEX [RAW]
<PRESS ANY KEY TO WIN>
STEELSERIES APEX [RAW]
Designed to enable users to react quickly & customise its performance for every game.
WHITE ILLUMINATION
Featuring 8 levels of intensity to help you easily see your keys and find your macros.
FASTEST KEY COMBINATIONS
Raised macro keys enable you to quickly swipe down for rapid key combos.
MASSIVELY MORE MACROS
34 more ways to win thanks to 17 macro keys that each feature up to 2 layers.
WWW.STEELSERIES.COM/APEX
steelseries
ASDA
AVAILABLE AT SELECTED STORES